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EXCELSIOR METHOD

FOR THE

BANJO

BY

G. L. LANSING

WHITE-SMITH MUSIC PUBLISHING Co.
BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO

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ELEMENTS OF MUSIC.

The principal characters used to express music are NOTES, which represent musical sounds, and RESTS, which represent silence.

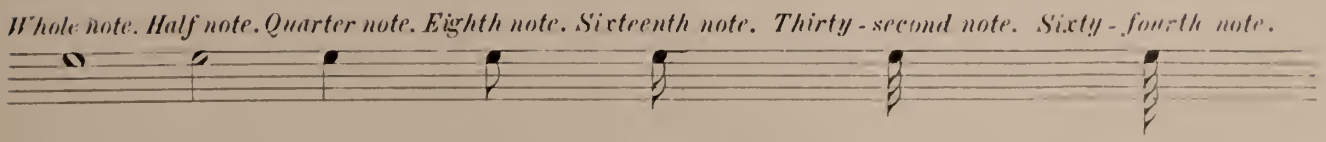
These chararacters are written upon the STAFF, a union of 5 lines and the 4 spaces between.

THE STAFF.

NOTES AND RESTS.

The different kinds and their names.

NOTES.



RESTS.

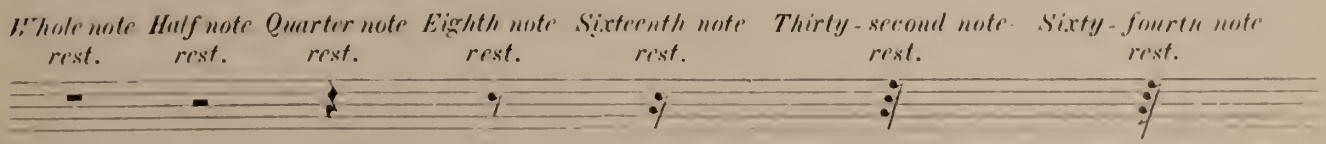
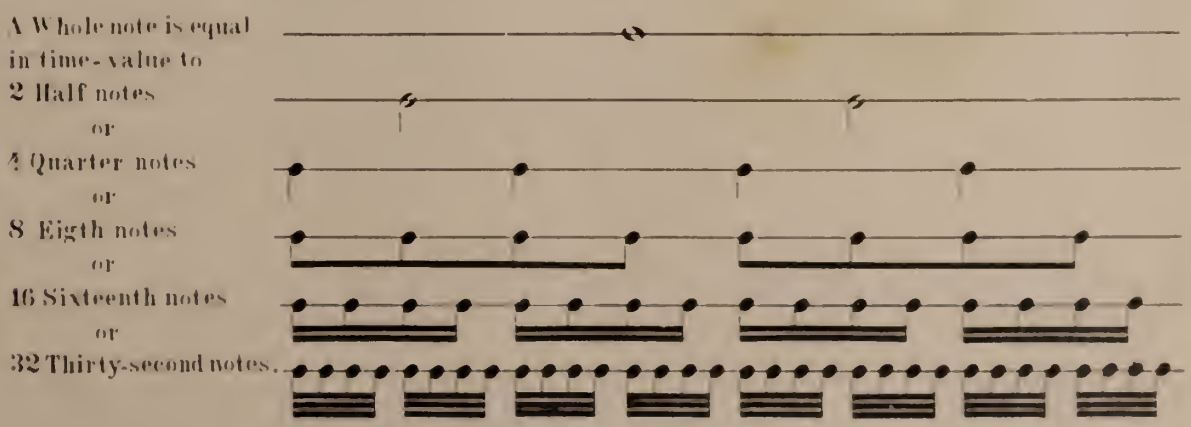


Table showing the relative time-value of notes.



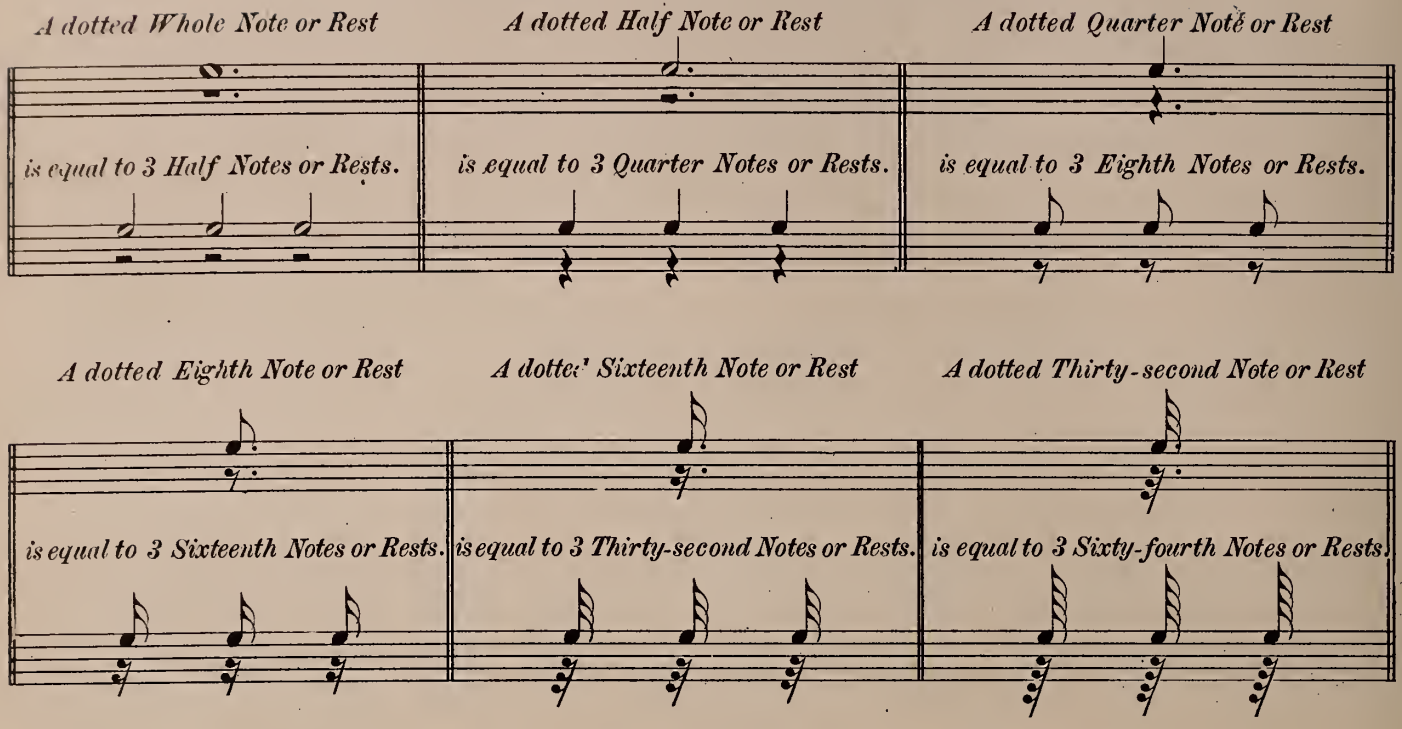
(or 64 Sixty-fourth notes.)

The same rule applies also to the Rests.

DOTTED NOTES AND RESTS.

A Dot after a note or rest increases the time-value one half.

Dotted Notes and Rests and their Equivalents.

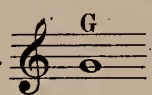


A *second dot* after a note or rest adds to the time-value of the note or rest, one half the value of the *first dot.* Thus a double-dotted Half Note (𝅗𝅥..) is equal to 3 Quarter Notes and 1 Eighth Note (♩♩♩♪), and a double-dotted Quarter Note (♩..) to 3 Eighth Notes and 1 Sixteenth Note(♪♪♪♬) and so on. Double dotted Rests have the same relative time-values as corresponding notes.

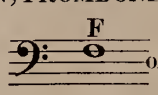
THE CLEF.

The CLEF is a character usually placed at the beginning of the Staff to indicate the Musical Pitch of the notes written thereon.

For all the higher instruments such as the FLUTE, VIOLIN, OBOE, CLARINET, CORNET, HORN, GUITAR, MANDOLIN and also the BANJO, FLAGEOLET, FIFE, CONCERTINA, ACCORDEON and some others, a Clef called the G Clef is used. It fixes the tone G upon the 2d line of the Staff.

G Clef.  or Treble Clef.

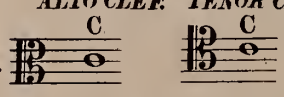
For instruments of a lower compass such as the VIOLONCELLO, DOUBLE BASS, BASSOON, TROMBONE, TUBA and others, a Clef called the F Clef is used. It fixes F upon the 4th line of the Staff.

F Clef.  or Bass Clef.

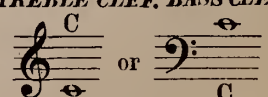
A Clef called the C Clef is used especially for the VIOLA and fixes C upon the middle line of the Staff.

This is called the Alto Clef. When placed on the 4th line it is called the Tenor Clef.

ALTO CLEF. TENOR CLEF.

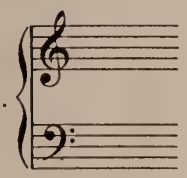
C Clef. 

TREBLE CLEF. BASS CLEF.

Same pitch as  or

In Music for the Violoncello, Bassoon and some others, several of these clefs are sometimes used.

Music for the PIANO, ORGAN and HARP requires the use of both the G and the F Clefs, which are placed on separate Staves connected by what is called a BRACE.

EX. 

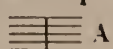
TIME, MEASURE & BAR.

There are three kinds of Time, viz:— *Common, Triple & Compound* Time.

Examples of Common Time. Examples of Triple Time. Examples of Compound Time.

C or $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{2}{4}$, ¢ or $\frac{2}{2}$ $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{3}{2}$, $\frac{3}{8}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$, $\frac{12}{8}$, $\frac{6}{4}$

The lower of the two figures indicates the kind of a note, and the upper, how many of that kind of a note are contained in a measure. Thus, $\frac{3}{4}$ indicates that there are three quarter notes to a measure.

A MEASURE is that portion of a musical composition contained between two single bars. A BAR is a perpendicular line drawn through the staff, thus:  A DOUBLE BAR is placed at the end of a piece of music; sometimes at the end of a section (strain) thereof. A DOUBLE BAR with dots, thus: is called a repeat, and signifies a repetition from the previous double bar, or the commencement of the piece.

ACCIDENTALS.

The Sharp (♯), Flat (♭), Natural (♮), Double Sharp (𝄪) and Double Flat (𝄫) are called ACCIDENTALS.

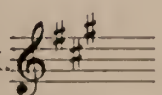
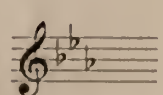
The ♯ before a note *raises* it a *Semitone* (half tone). The ♭ before a note *lowers* it a Semitone.

The 𝄪 " " " " " " Whole Tone. The 𝄫 " " " " " " Whole Tone.

The ♮ before a note removes a previous ♯ or ♭.

The ♮♯ before a note that has been double-sharped *lowers* it a Semitone.

The ♮♭ " " " " " " double-flatted *raises* " "

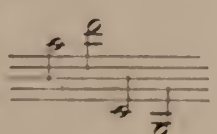
The Sharps and Flats placed next to the Clef are called the *Signature*. EX.  or 

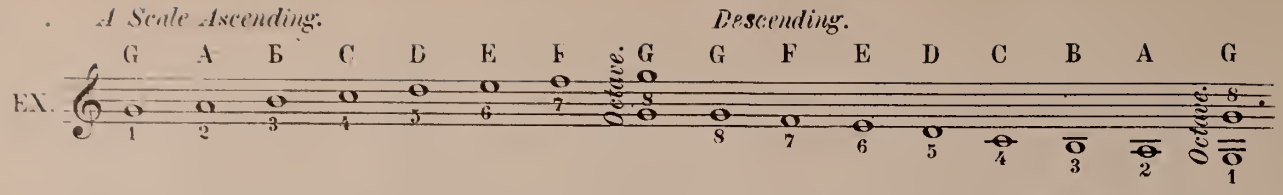
NOTE: Each Sharp or Flat in the Signature affects that particular tone upon which it is placed so long as it remains in the Signature, unless changed by the introduction of other accidentals before the notes.

THE SCALE.

A SCALE is a series of Musical sounds, ascending or descending according to a system of tones and semitones. The first seven letters of the Alphabet are applied to the seven principal tones of the Scale. Also the Italian monosyllables *Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Si.*

It has already been shown that the G Clef fixes G upon the 2d line of the Staff. From this starting point all other tones can be determined. Notes extending above or below the regular degrees of the Staff are written upon what are called LEDGER LINES, and the spaces between.

EX. 



NOTE. Observe that the seven letters follow each other in regular alphabetical order, and that the eighth letter is always the same as the first, whichever one we begin with. It is therefore said to be an *Octave* (8 tones) higher or lower than the first, accordingly as we go up or down.

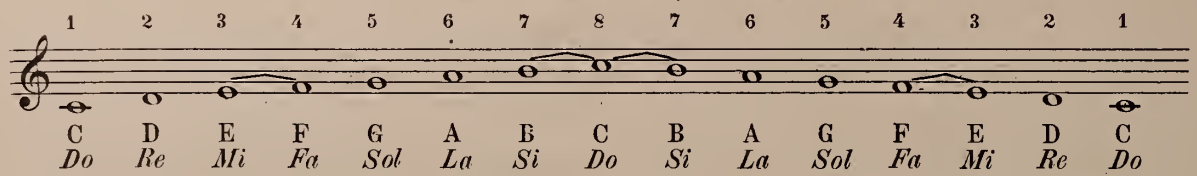
DIFFERENT KINDS OF SCALES.

The Scale is the basis of all music. There are three kinds in common use: the *Major Scale,* the *Minor Scale,* and the *Chromatic Scale.* The *Major Scale* consists of seven principal tones, viz: five whole tones, and two semitones. The semitones occur between the *third* and *fourth,* and the *seventh* and *eighth* degrees of the Scale. Degrees or intervals may be *Major, Minor,* or *Perfect,* viz; — Major 2d, Minor 2d, Major 3d, Minor 3d, Perfect 4th, Perfect 5th and so on up to the octaves.

The Major Scale.

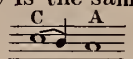
SCALE OF C MAJOR.

The semitones are indicated by this sign



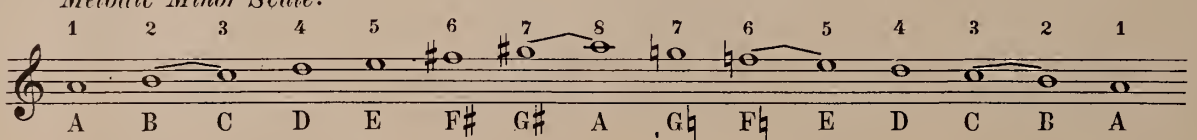
All Major Scales have the same construction and the same order of intervals, ascending or descending.

The Minor Scale.

Every *Major Scale* has its relative *Minor.* The *Signature* is the same in each, and the Key-note is a *Minor Third* (tone and a half) below that of the relative Major Scale. Ex.  It has also five tones and two semitones, but with a difference in the order of intervals. The semitones occur between the *second* and *third,* and *seventh* and *eighth* degrees of the scale *ascending,* and between the *fifth* and *sixth* and *second* and *third* degrees *descending.*

SCALE OF A MINOR. (Relative to C Major.)

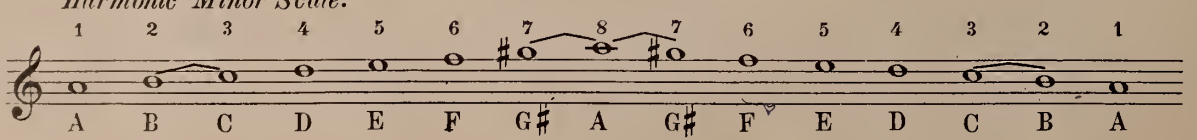
Melodic Minor Scale.



There are two kinds of Minor Scales in common use; the above which is called the *Melodic Minor Scale,* and the following which is called the *Harmonic Minor Scale.* Observe the difference in the arrangement of the semitones.

SCALE OF A MINOR.

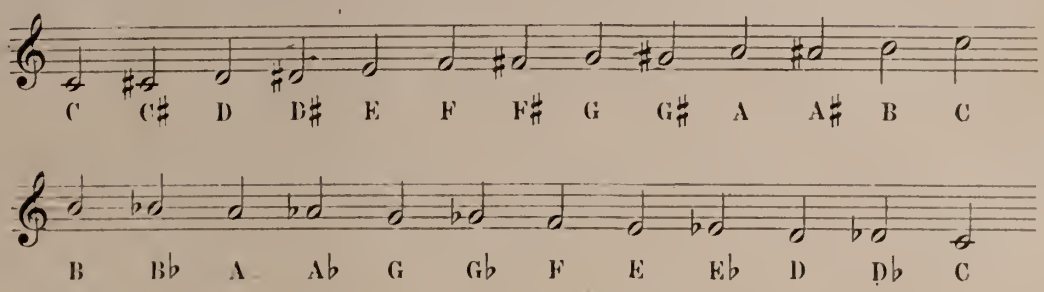
Harmonic Minor Scale.



As the Student will meet both forms in his subsequent practice, an example of each has therefore been given.

THE CHROMATIC SCALE.

This Scale is composed of twelve semitones, and may be formed upon any degree of the scale, major or minor. In *ascending*, the Sharp, Double-sharp, or Natural is employed in its formation, but in *descending*, the Flat, Double-Flat, or Natural is used accordingly as there are sharps or flats in the signature.



MISCELLANEOUS CHARACTERS.

Notes having a dot or dash over or under them are to be played short and detached. This is called *Staccato.*

This sign 𝄐 called a *Hold,* placed over a note or rest, prolongs it beyond its exact value. It is sometimes placed at the end of a piece instead of the word *Fine,* which means the end.

The character ⁀ called a *Tie* when placed over two notes on the *same degree of the staff* makes them one continuous sound.

When placed over two notes on *different degrees* it is called a *Slur* and indicates that the notes it applies to are to be played in a smooth and connected manner.

Three notes played in the time of two of the same kind are called a *Triplet,* and are indicated thus: 3

A *Sextolet* is a group of six notes played in the time of four of the same kind. EX. 6

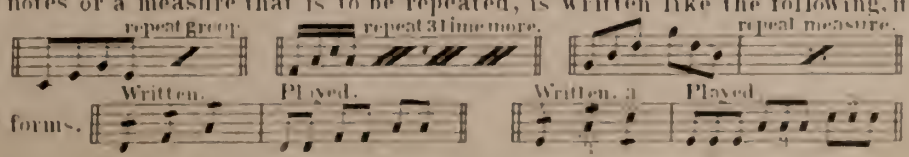
The 𝄋 called a *Sign,* directs the player back to where it was previously indicated, for the purpose of repeating a certain portion of the music.

A passage that repeats, sometimes has two endings indicated thus: 1º 2º That marked 1º is to be played the first time and the other 2º the second time.

Every measure has its natural or primary and secondary accents, besides other smaller subdivisions. When the natural accent is perverted and made to fall on an unaccented division of the measure it is called *Syncopation.*

When a stronger accent is required than that which naturally belongs to a note it is indicated by one or another of the following signs called *Accent Marks.* ∧, > or *fz* called *Forzando*, *rfz Rinforzando*, and sometimes *ffz*, according to the degree of accent desired.

When a group of notes or a measure that is to be repeated, is written like the following, it is called *Abbreviation.*



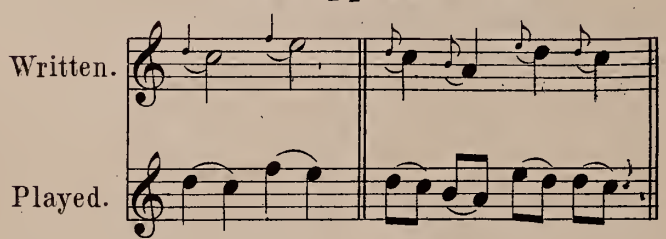
ORNAMENTS.

The chief musical embellishments are the *Appoggiatura* (or Grace Note), the *Gruppetto* (or Turn), and the *Trill* (or Shake).

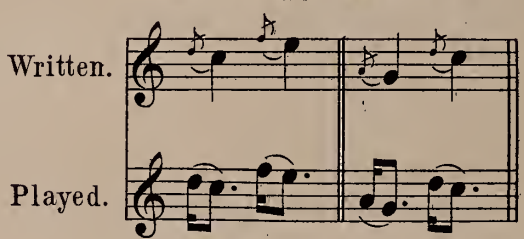
APPOGGIATURAS.

The Appoggiatura is a small note placed before a principal note for the purpose of ornamentation or effect. There are two kinds of Appoggiaturas in common use—the *Long* Appoggiatura, which takes one half of the time-value of the principal note before which it is placed and also receives the accent—and the *Short* Appoggiatura, which is played very quickly, the accent in this case falling on the principal note.

Long Appoggiaturas.

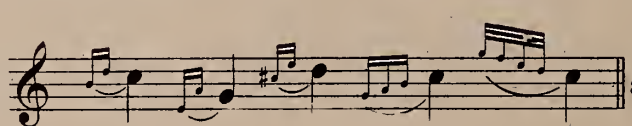


Short Appoggiaturas.



A group of Appoggiatura notes sometimes precedes a principal note. These notes are played very rapidly and the principal note receives the accent.

Examples:

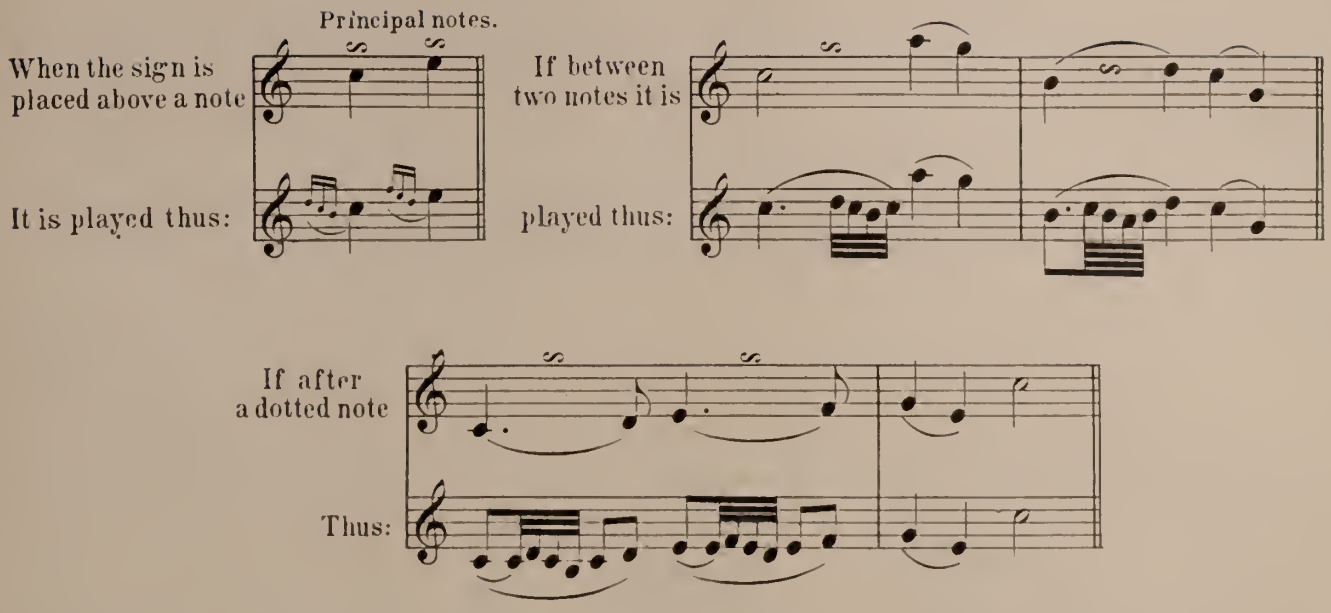


and other forms.

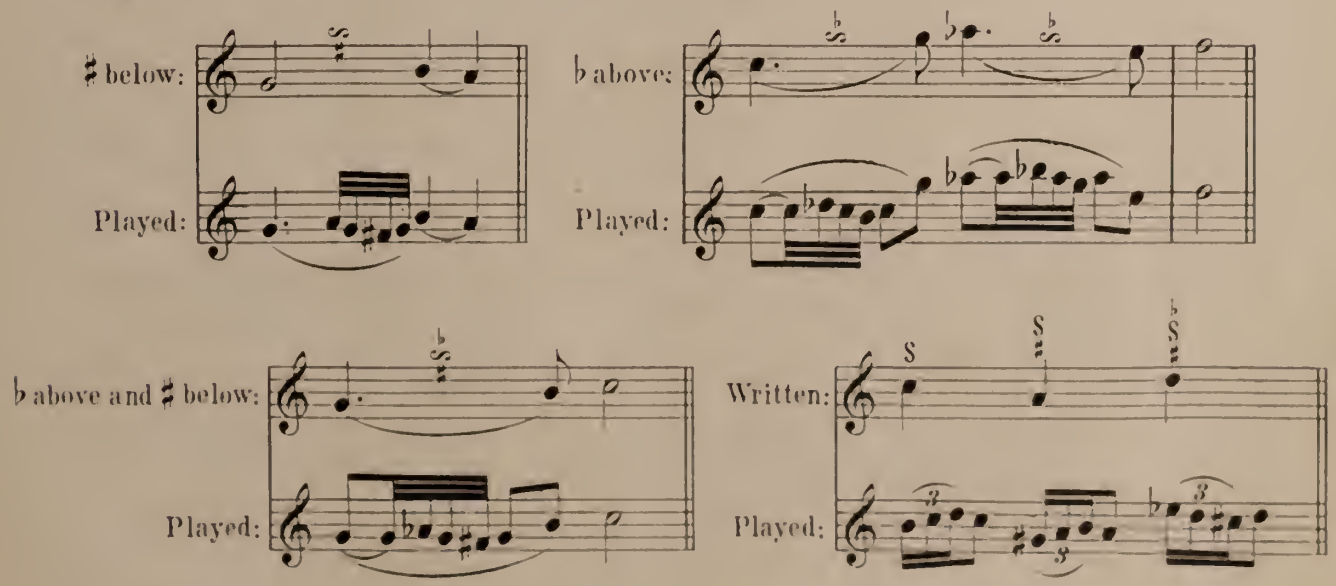
THE GRUPPETTO (or Turn).

This musical embellishment is a group of notes (3 or 4, as the case may be) consisting of a principal note and the next note above and below it. It is indicated by the sign ∾. There are several forms of the Gruppetto as will be seen by the following examples.

Examples of the Gruppetto.



When a note in the Gruppetto is to be sharped or flatted, either above or below the principal note, or both, the sign is expressed accordingly. in the following manner:



THE TRILL (or Shake).

The Trill is a rapid alternation of two notes a tone or a semitone apart. It is indicated by the sign *tr* placed above the principal note, the alternating note being the one next above it.* There are three kinds of trills – the *Perfect Trill*, (with finishing notes) – the *Imperfect Trill*, (without finishing notes) – and the *Mordente* or short trill, indicated thus 𝆖.

*Sometimes the next one *below* it.

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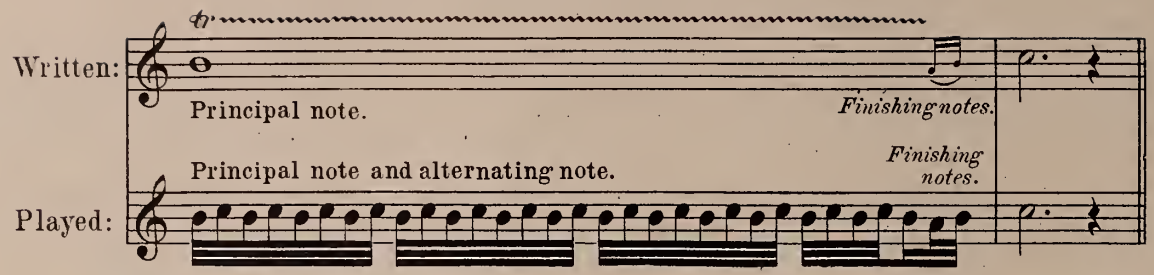
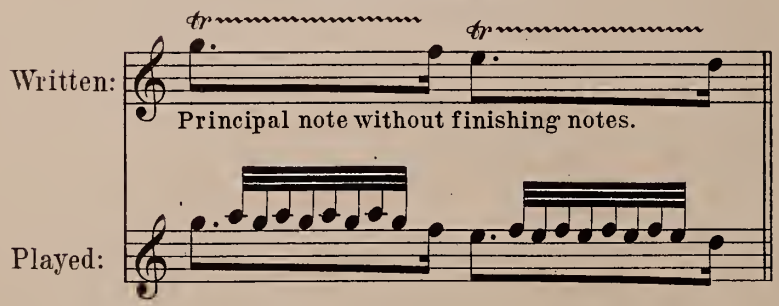
TEACHER OF MANDOLIN & BANJO
PORTLAND, ME.

Examples of the Trill.

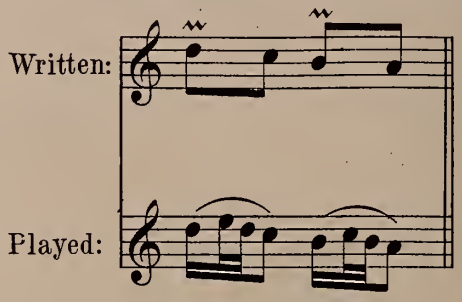
Perfect Trill.



Imperfect Trill.



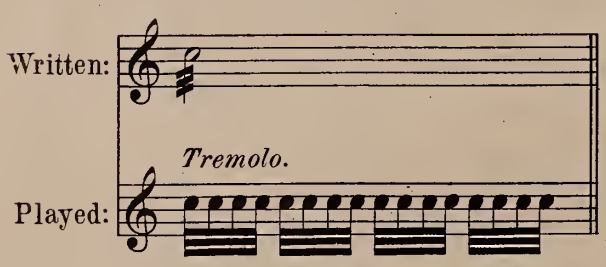
Mordente (or Short Trill).



OTHER SIGNS.

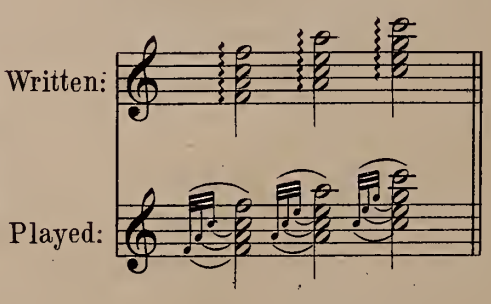
Tremolo.

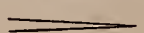
A very rapid repetition of the same tone is called *Tremolo*



Arpeggios.

When chords are to be played in the manner of the Harp it is called *Arpeggio.*



p, piano	means	soft.
pp, pianissimo	,,	very soft.
f, forte	,,	loud.
ff, fortissimo	,,	very loud.
mf, mezzo-forte	,,	half or moderately loud.
fp, forte-piano	,,	loud and immediately soft again.
fz, sf or > *sforzando*	,,	sharply accented.
crescendo, cresc. or	,,	increasing in loudness.
diminuendo, dim. or 	,,	decreasing in loudness.

Excelsior Method For THE BANJO

C Notation

The modern banjo consists of a rim varying in size from ten inches to twelve and one half inches in diamater. The head is drawn over the rim and kept very tight by brackets. The arm or neck upon which the fingerboard rests is firmly attatched to the rim.

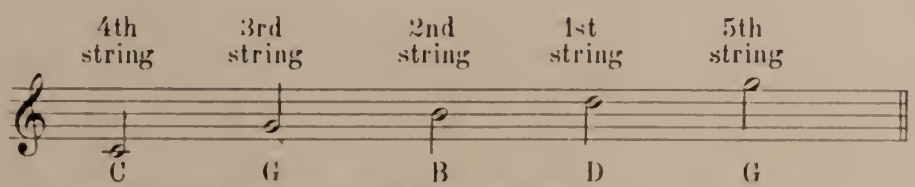
There are twenty two frets set into the fingerboard giving a range of three octaves from the open bass string to the upper fret. The raised piece of ivory or ebony over which the strings pass near the pegs is called the nut.

The tailpiece is at the extreme end of the rim.

The Strings and Bridge

The five strings of the Banjo are the 1st string, (D); the 2nd string, (B); the 3rd string, (G); the 4th string, (C); the 5th string, (G). The 1st and 5th are the same size; the 2nd string is a grade larger, and the 3rd string a grade larger still. The 4th string is made of white silk, wound with silver wire. The Bridge over which the strings pass should stand at exactly the same distance from the 12th fret, that the latter stands from the Nut.

The Strings



These sound an octave lower than written.

How To Tune The Banjo

First tune the 4th string by means of a pitch-pipe, piano, or other instrument to C, as shown in the diagram above. Then place the second finger on the seventh fret of the 4th string, and tune the 3rd string in unison with it, producing G. Next, place the second finger on the 3rd string, at the fourth fret and tune the 2nd string in unison with it, producing B. Next, place the second finger on the third fret of the 2nd string, and tune the 1st string in unison with it, producing D. Lastly, place the second finger on the fifth fret of the 1st string, and tune the 5th string in unison with it, producing G, an octave above the 3rd string.

Holding the Banjo

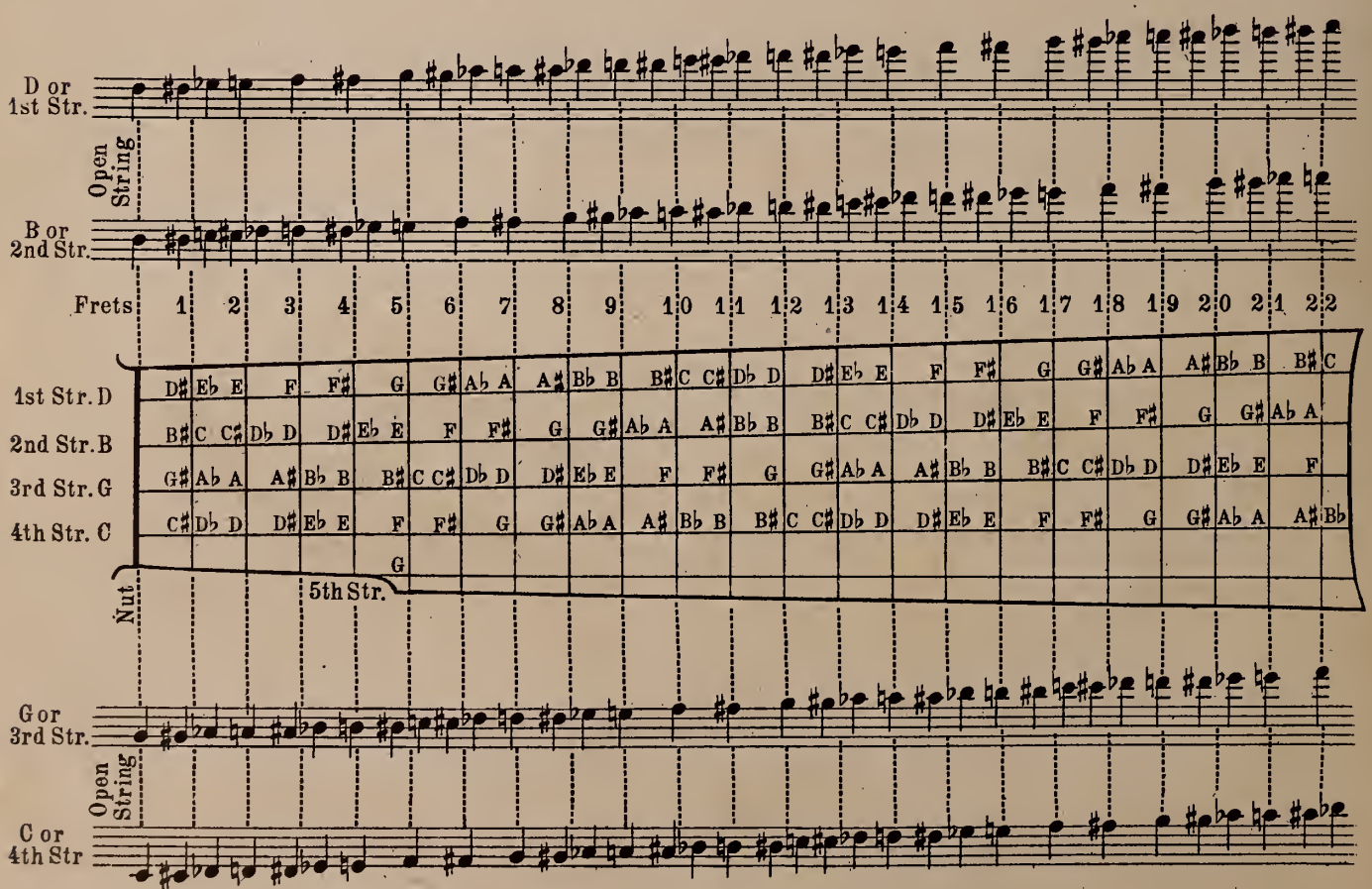
The performer should sit in a natural position, the right foot raised either on a footstool or by placing the heel against the chair leg. The rim of the banjo should rest on the right leg about four inches from the body. It is kept in place by a moderate pressure of the body on the upper part of the rim. The arm on neck of the instrument should be raised so that the pegs are in line with the chin. Support the neck at the nut in the hollow between the thumb and largest joint of the forefinger of the left hand, the thumb being on the upper side of the neck, at the nut, with the first and second fingers arched, directly over the first and second strings. The right forearm should rest on the rim, the little finger resting on the head about three inches in front of the bridge to steady it. The little finger remains on the head in all playing except in chords of four or five notes and in drum slides.

Sign, For Fingering

RIGHT HAND		LEFT HAND	
×	indicates thumb	Figure 1	indicates 1st finger
.	" 1st finger	" 2	" 2nd "
..	" 2nd "	" 3	" 3rd "
...	" 3rd "	" 4	" 4th "

Diagram of the Banjo Finger-board

Showing the Chromatic Scale on each String

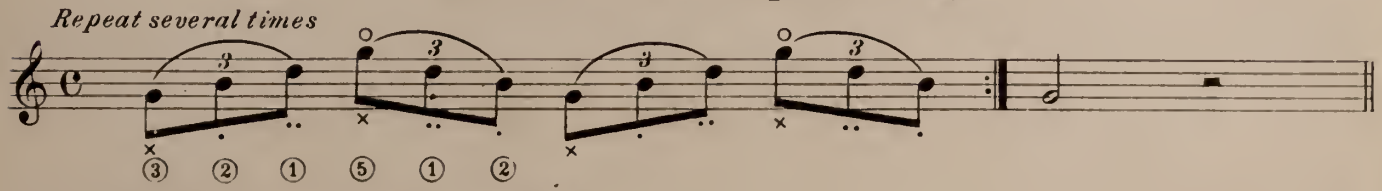


It was customary until recently to indicate the short string by a flag or but few of the writers of the present day use it. A cipher is now placed over the note.

Rules for Proper Tone Production

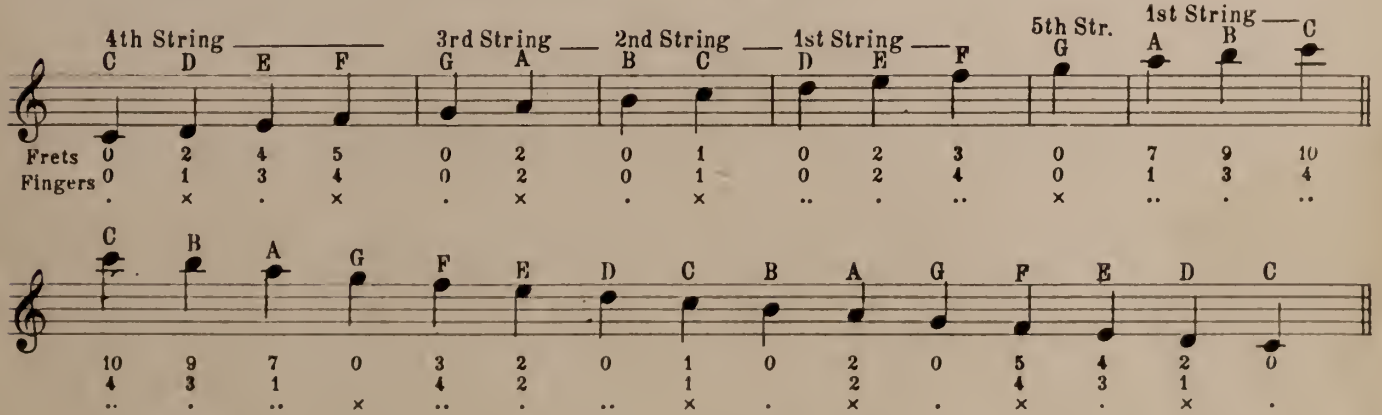
The thumb of the right hand should never bend after striking a note, but kept rigid. The fingers should be trained to pick the strings firmly. Never pick a string up but across, as by so doing the disagreeable twang is eliminated. Never permit the thumb to pass under the fingers, but keep it at least an inch in front of the first finger at all times.

Exercise On the Open String

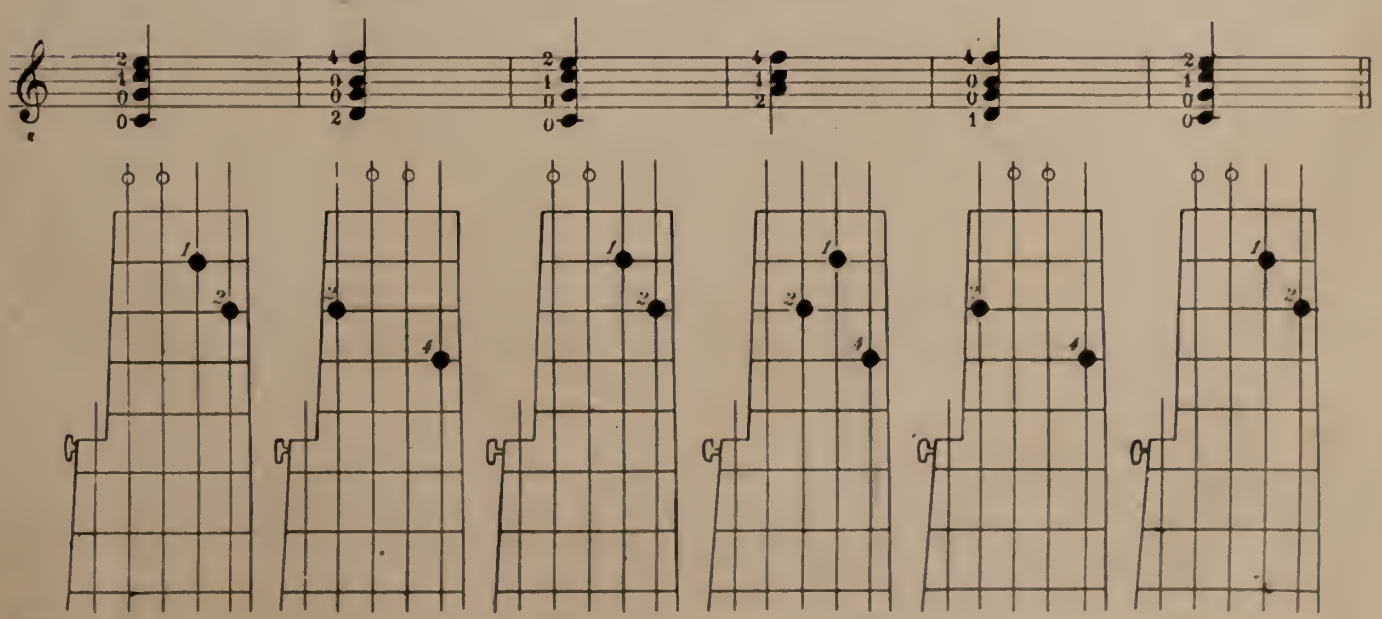


Encircled figures indicate the strings used.

Scale in C Major

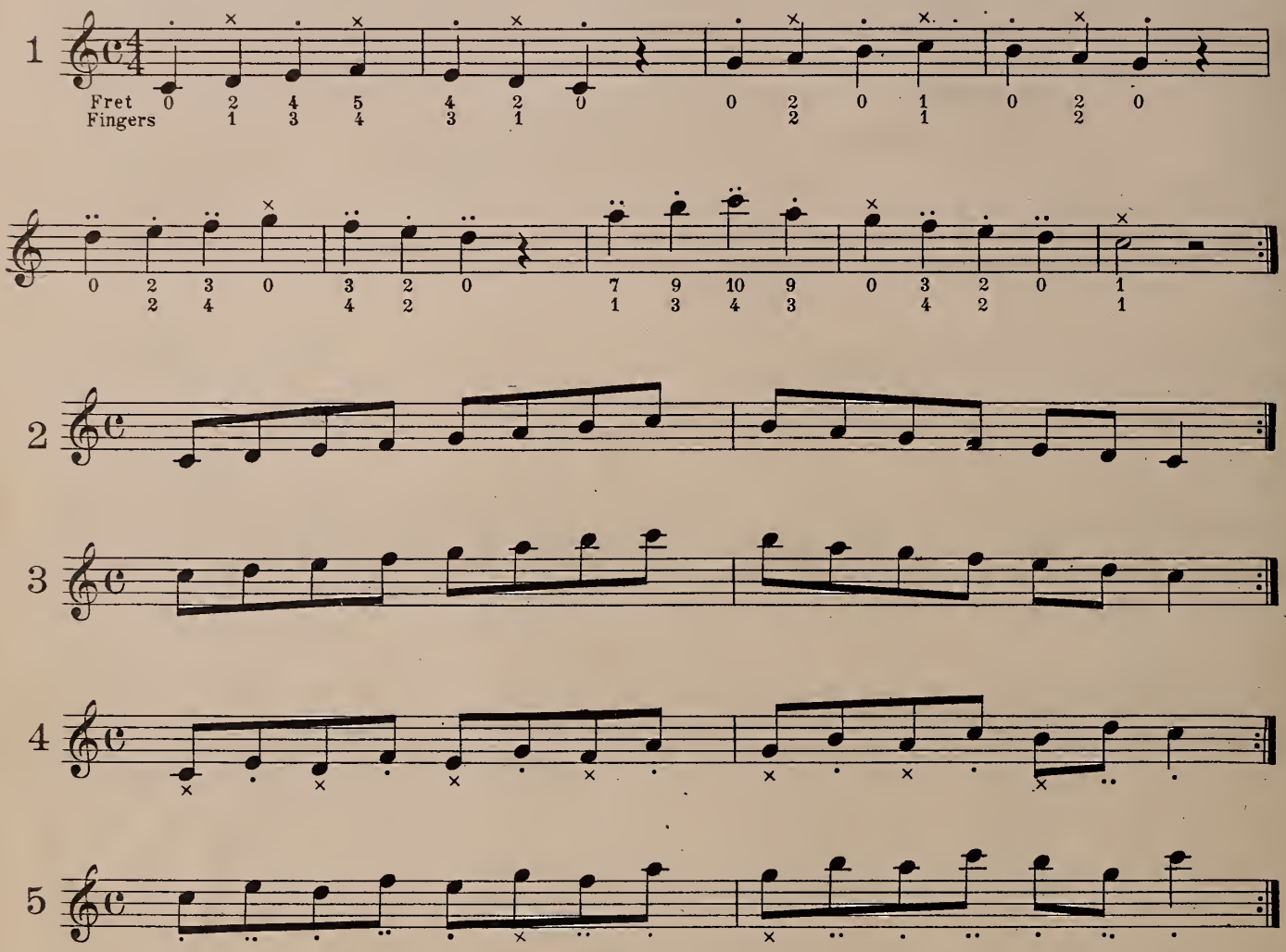


Chords In C Major

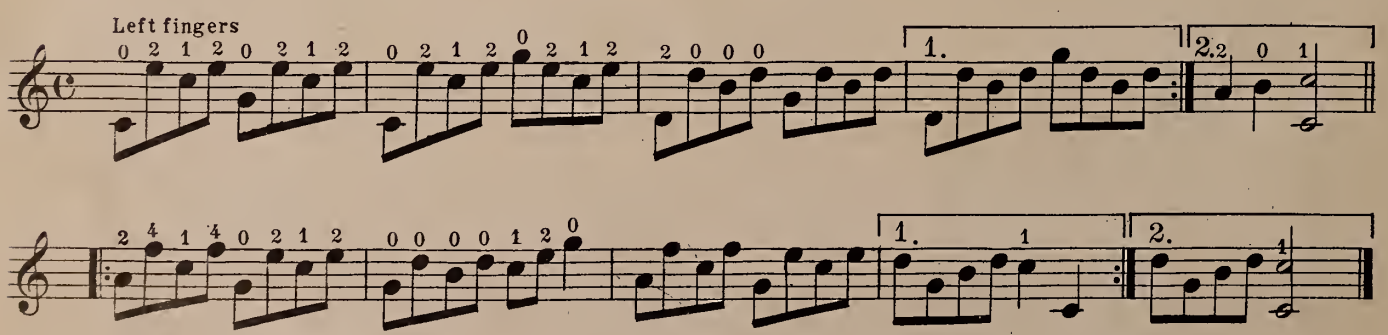


Scale Exercises

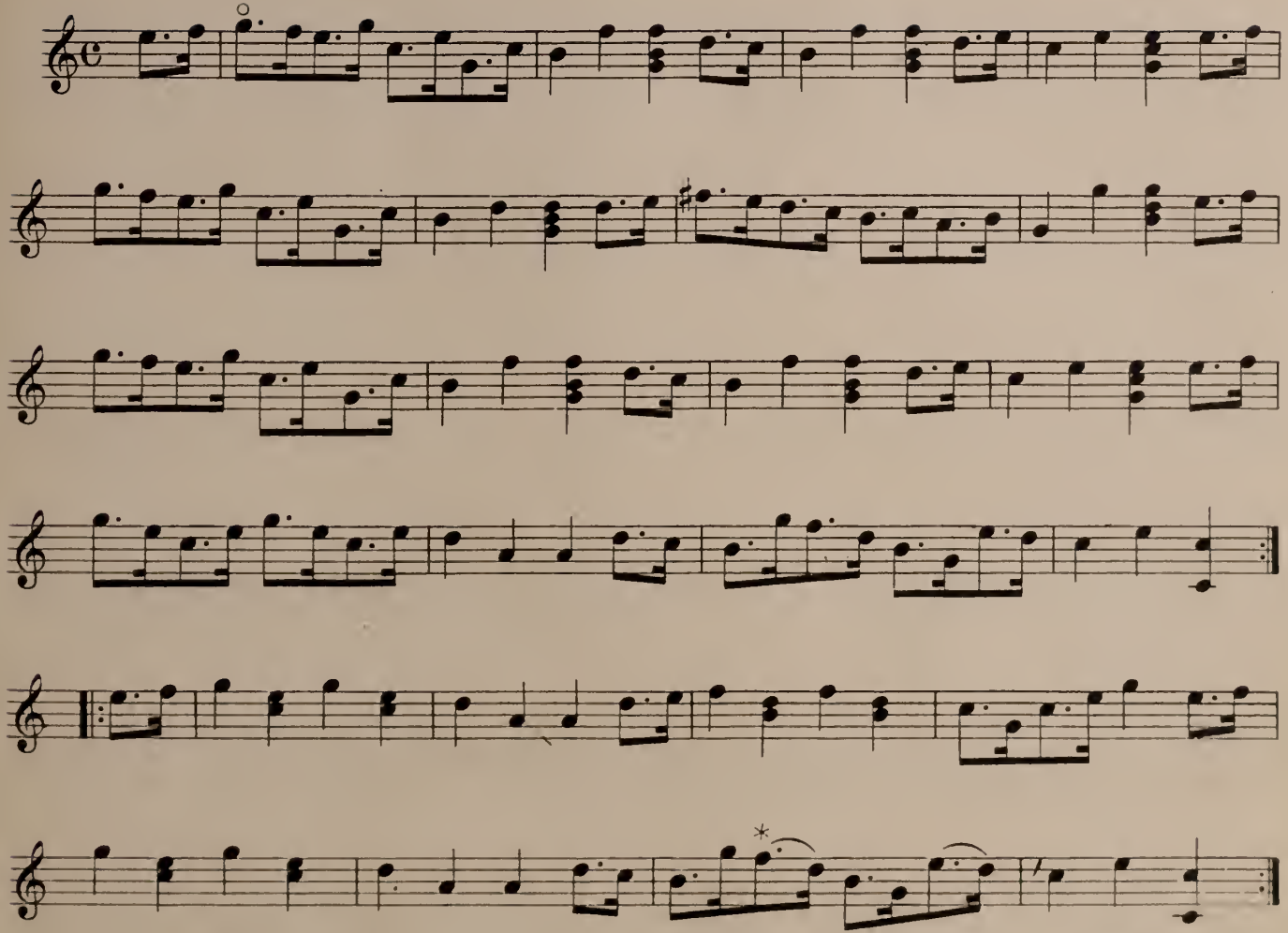
The following five exercises should be practiced faithfully until the student has firmly located the notes and proper fingering. Repeat each exercise several times.



Melody_Banjo Shuffle



Alabama Echoes

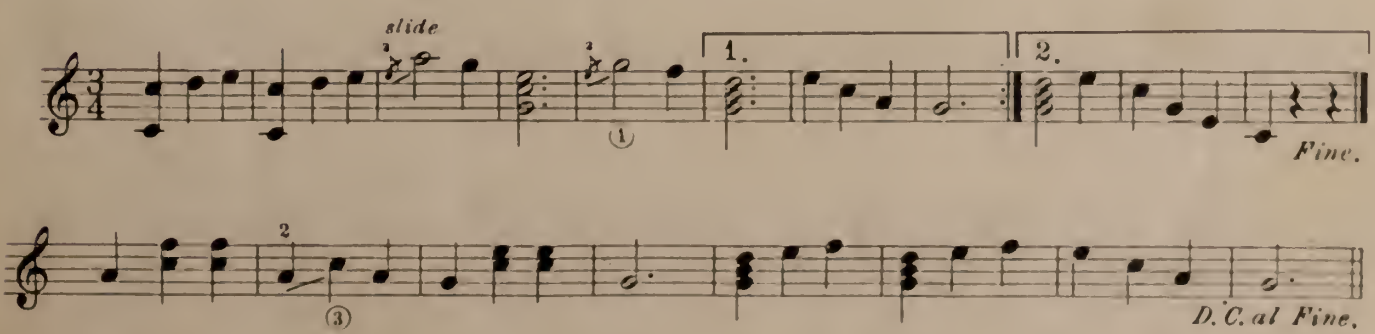


*The slur indicates that the string is to be snapped without the aid of the right hand, pick D in the usual way and sound B by pulling the string with the 4th finger of the left hand.

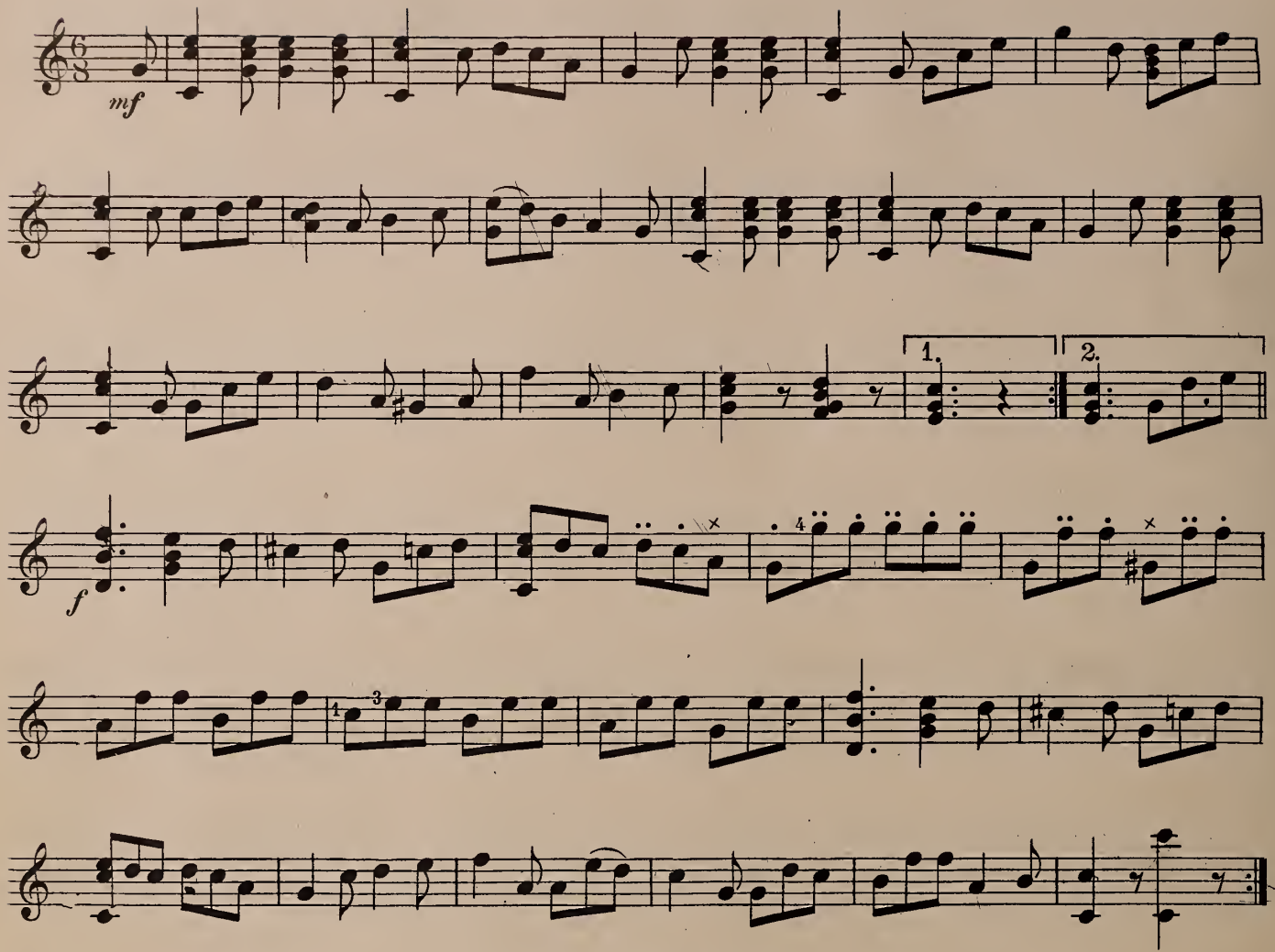
The Slide

The slide is made by picking the first note then quickly sliding the finger to the following note on the same string. In slow movements both notes are sometimes picked but never when slide begins with a small note.

Waltz Petite

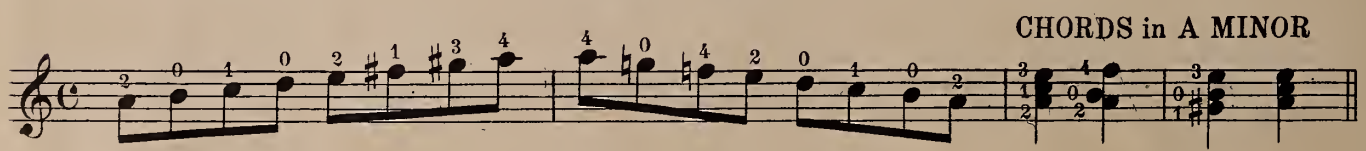


March Melody

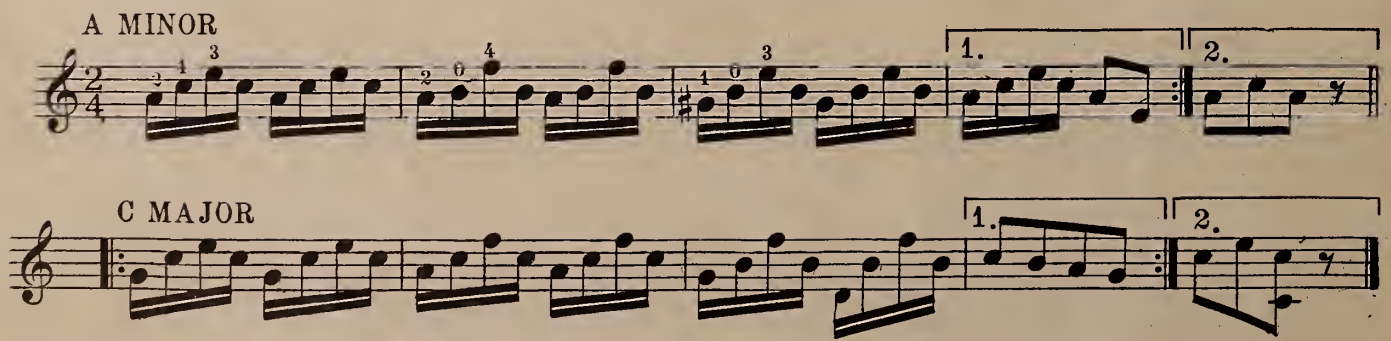


Scale in A Minor

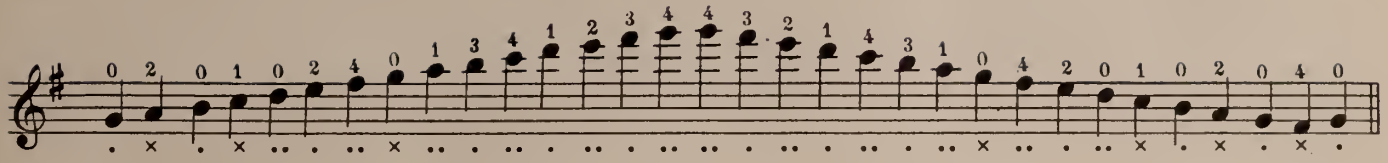
(relative to C Major)



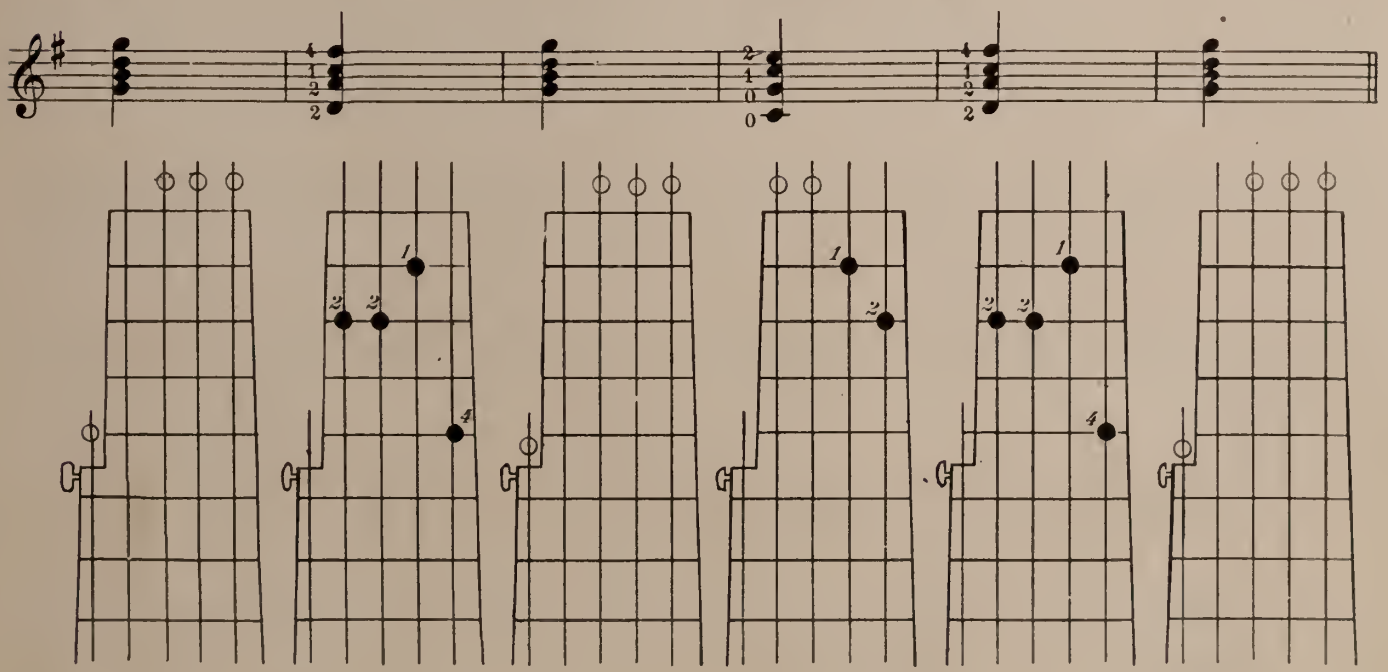
Banjo Juba



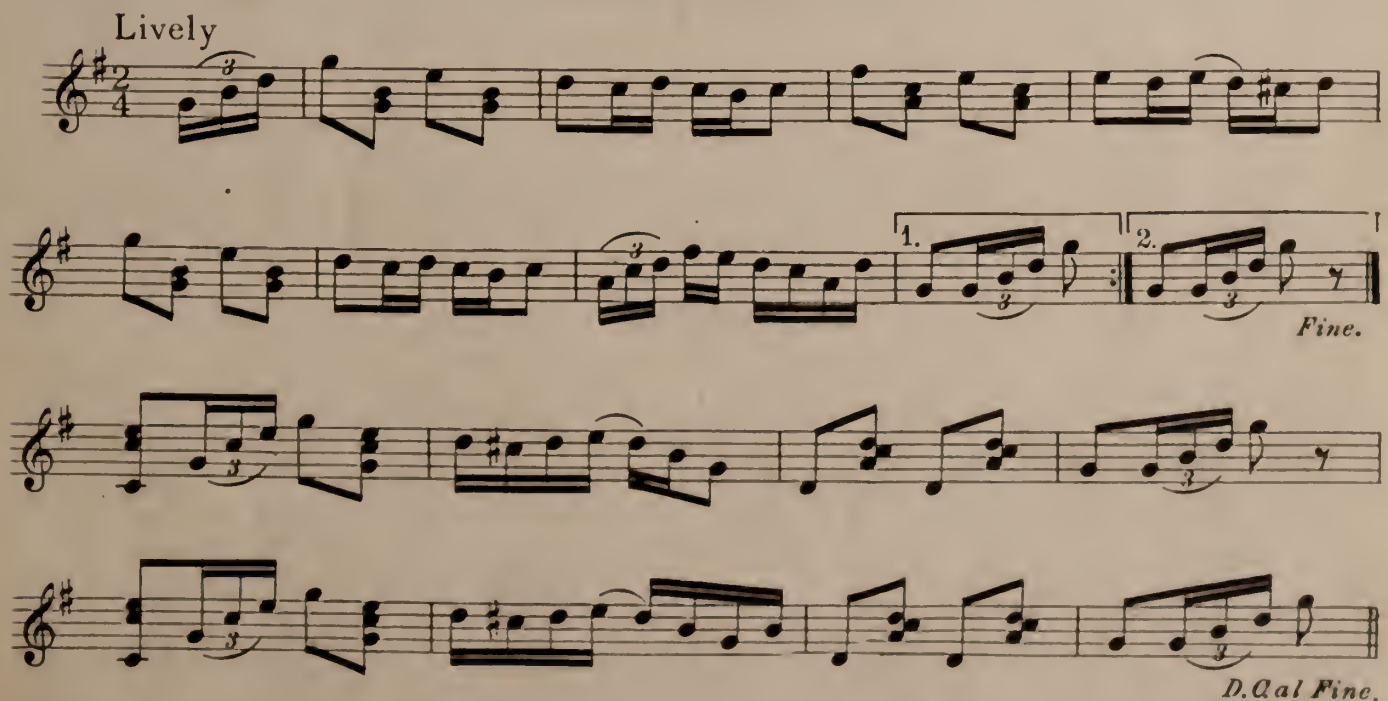
Scale In G Major



Chords In G Major



Students' Favorite



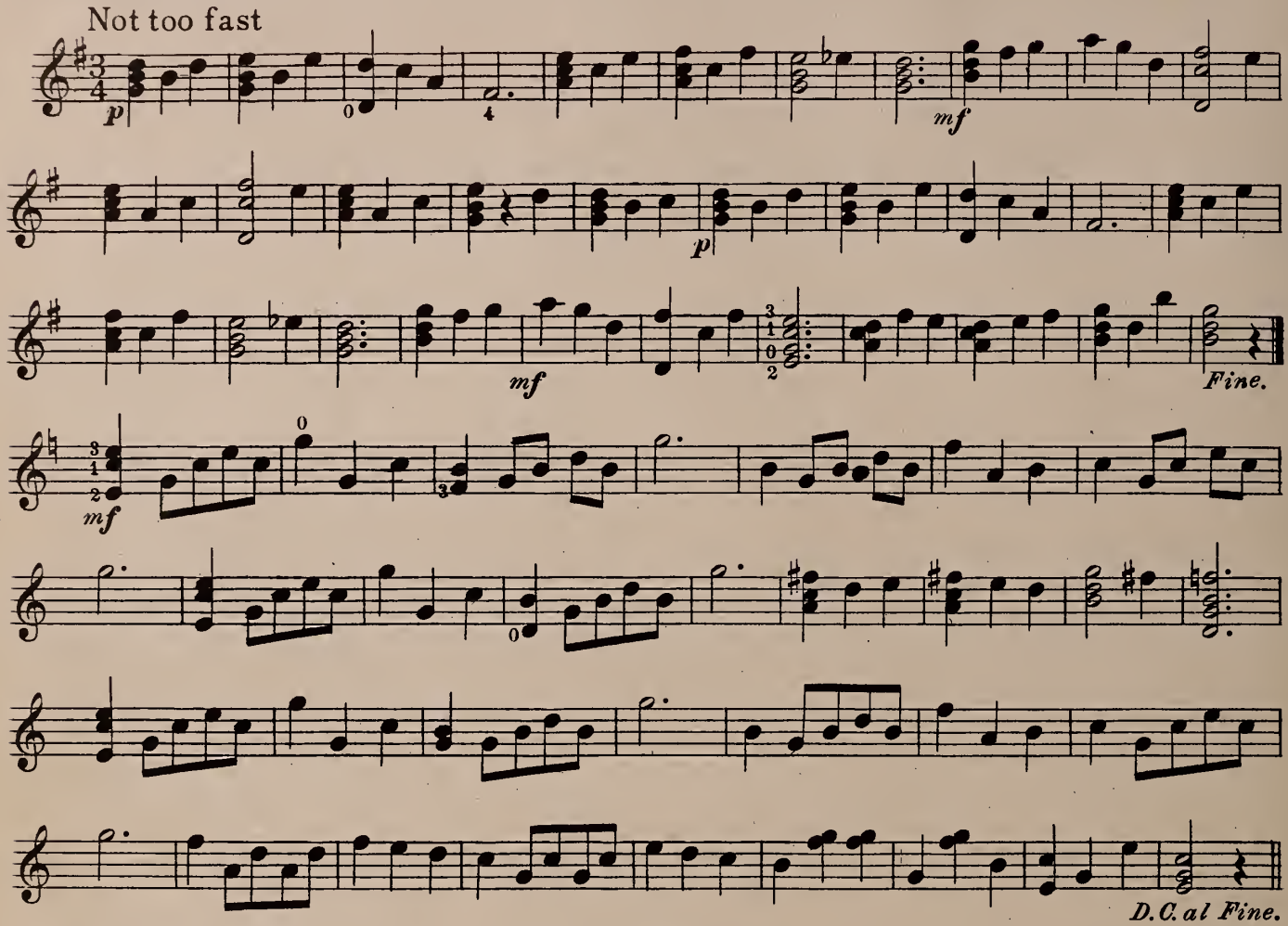
Elevating the 4th String

In pieces marked Tune 4th String to D, or Elevate Bass String, it signifies that the Bass or 4th string is to be tuned one tone higher than the usual piteh.

Beauty Dream Waltz

Tune 4th String to D

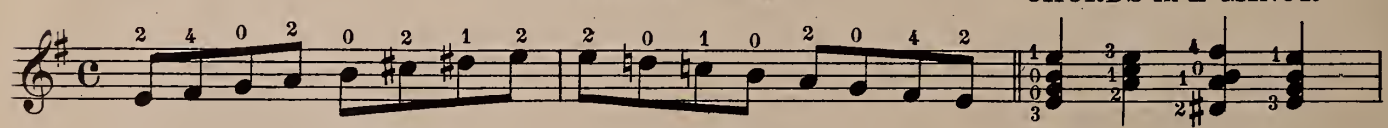
Not too fast



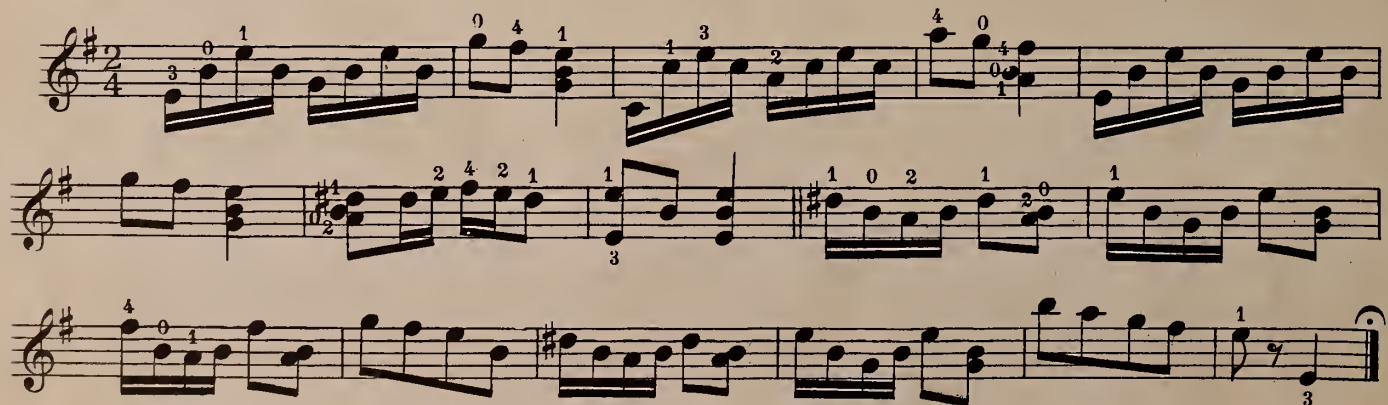
Scale in E Minor

(relative to G Major)

CHORDS in E MINOR



Etude in E Minor

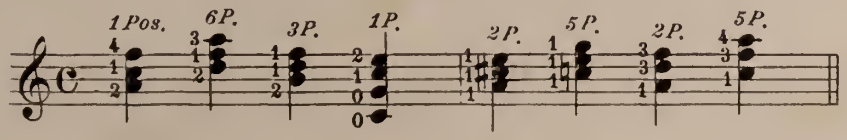


The Positions

Position marks are determined by the fret at which the first finger of the left hand is located. In this work the terms Bar, Barre and Pos-Bar are not used as the writers of the present day have discontinued them.

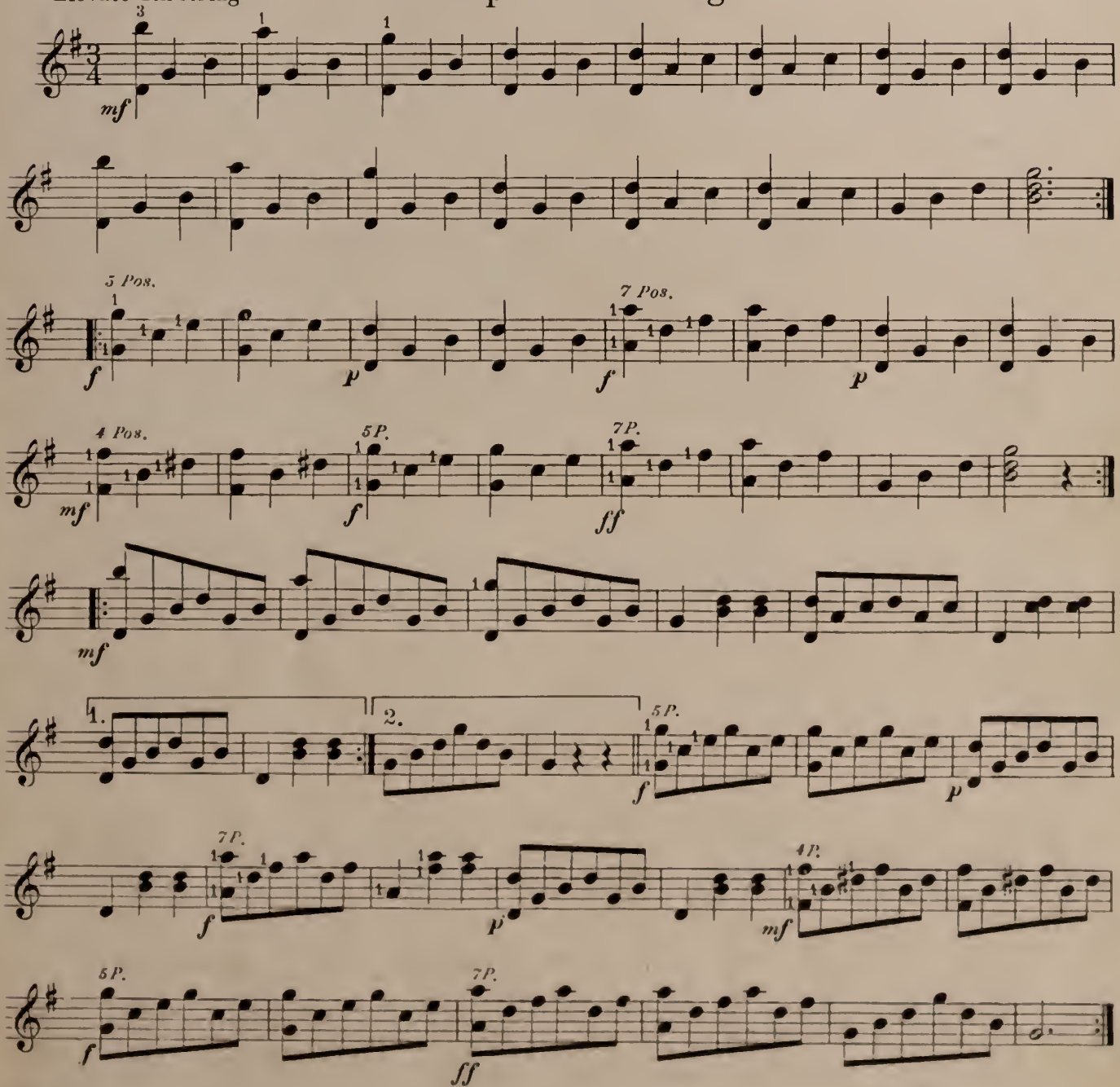
Figures enclosed in a circle denote string. ③ ④

Examples

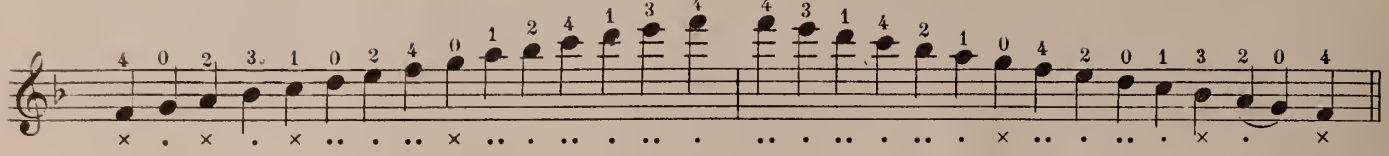


The Spanish Fandango

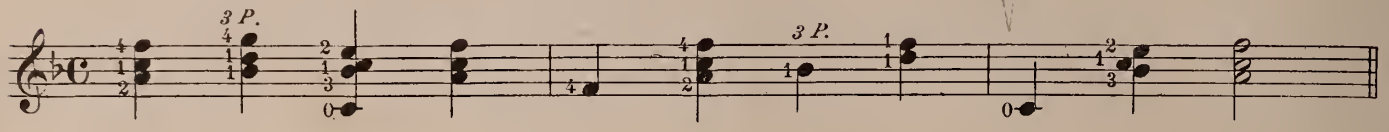
Elevate 4th string



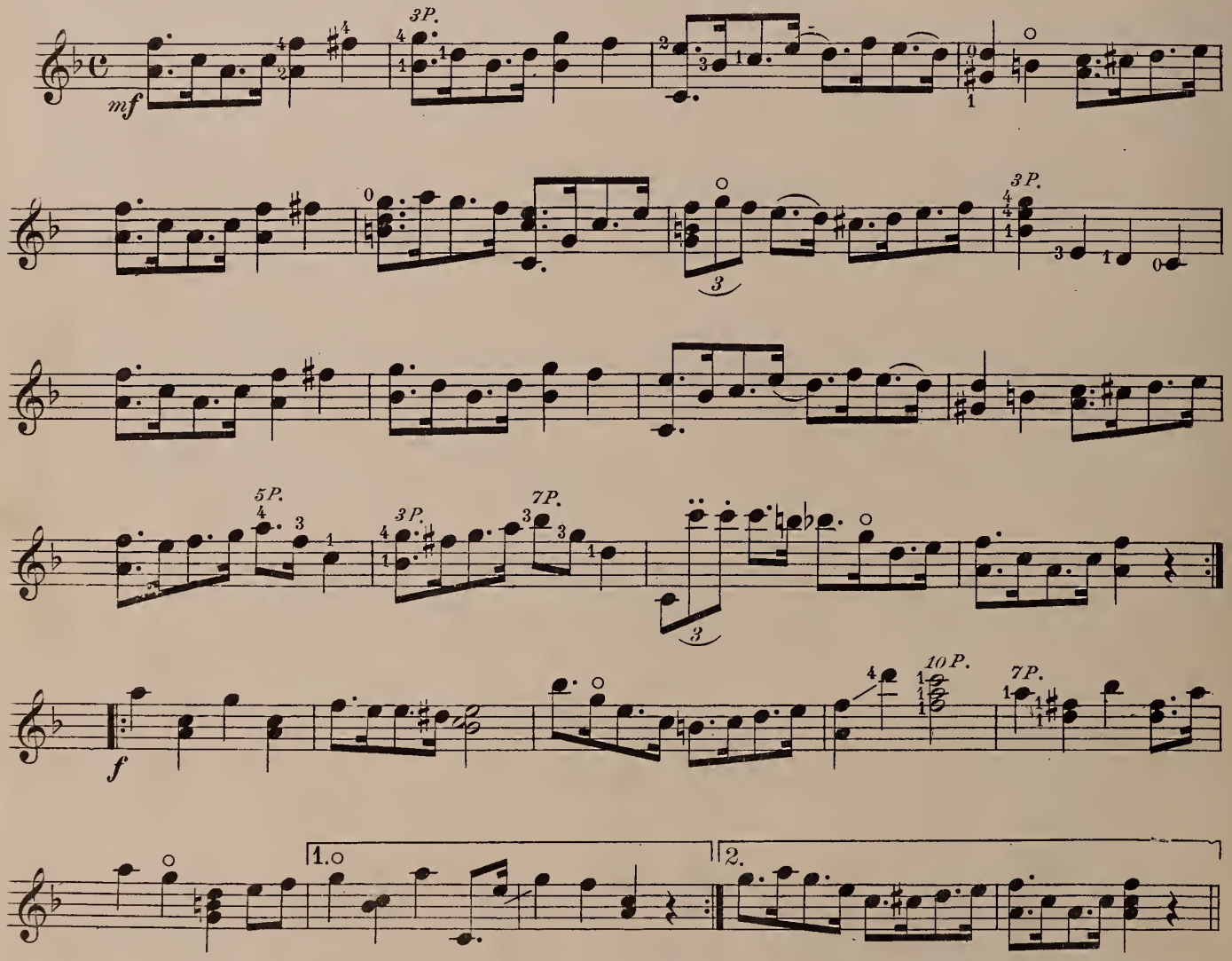
Scale in F Major



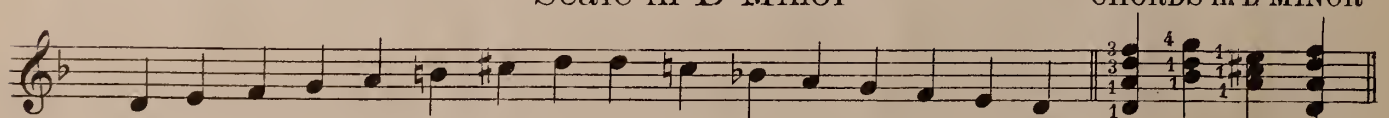
Chords in F Major



Honeymoon Caprice



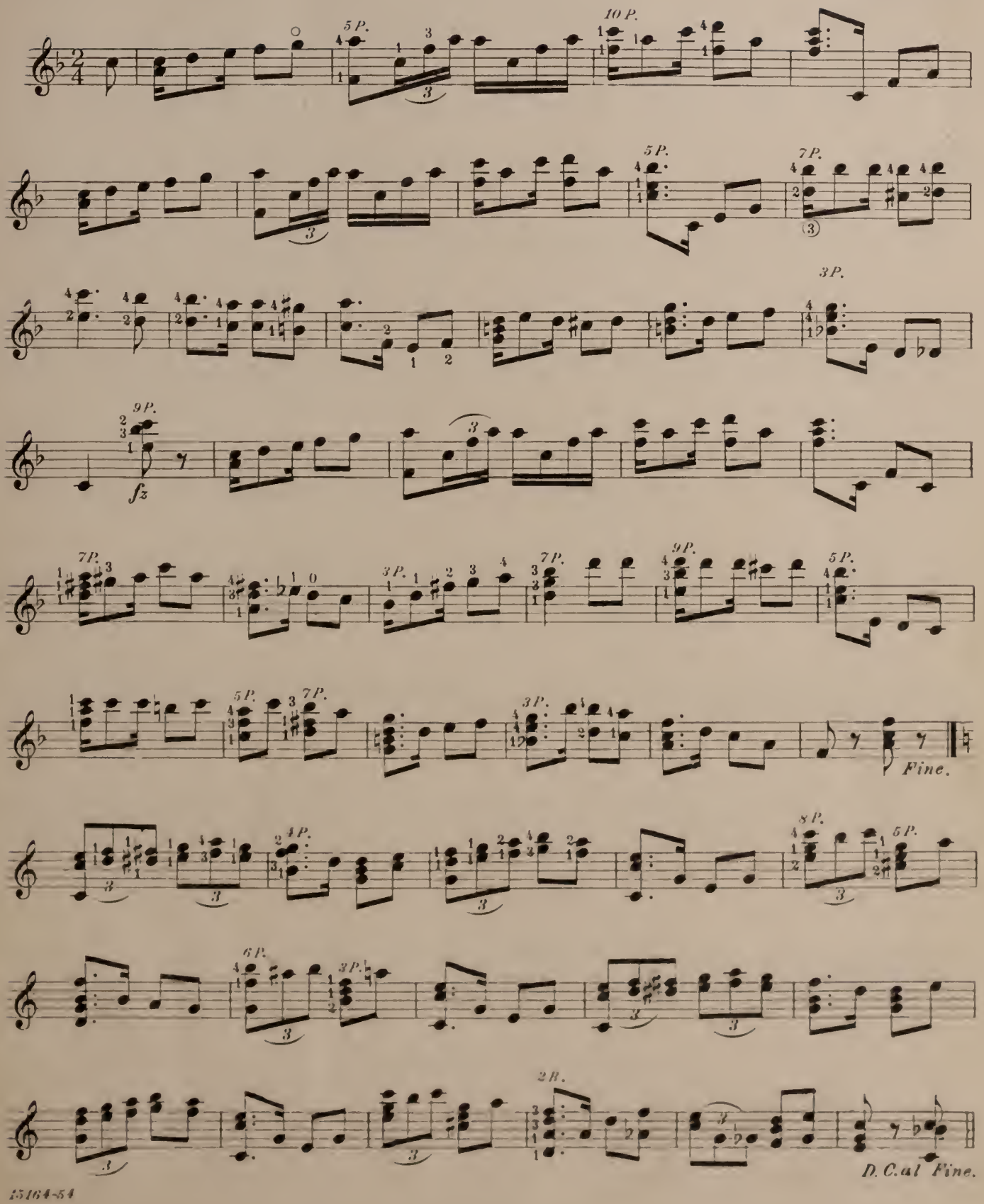
Scale in D Minor



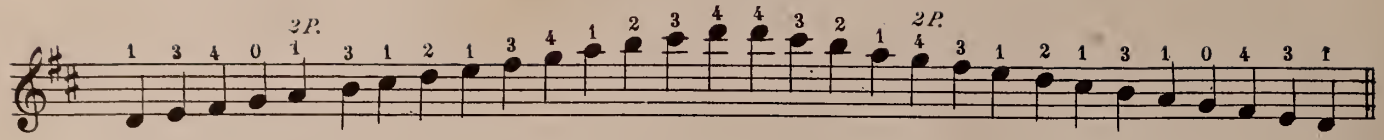
CHORDS in D MINOR

Danse Español

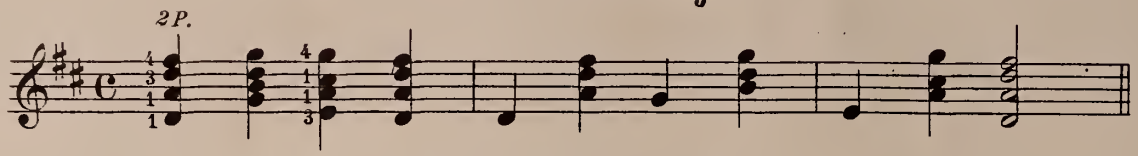
G. L. LANSING
(For this Work)



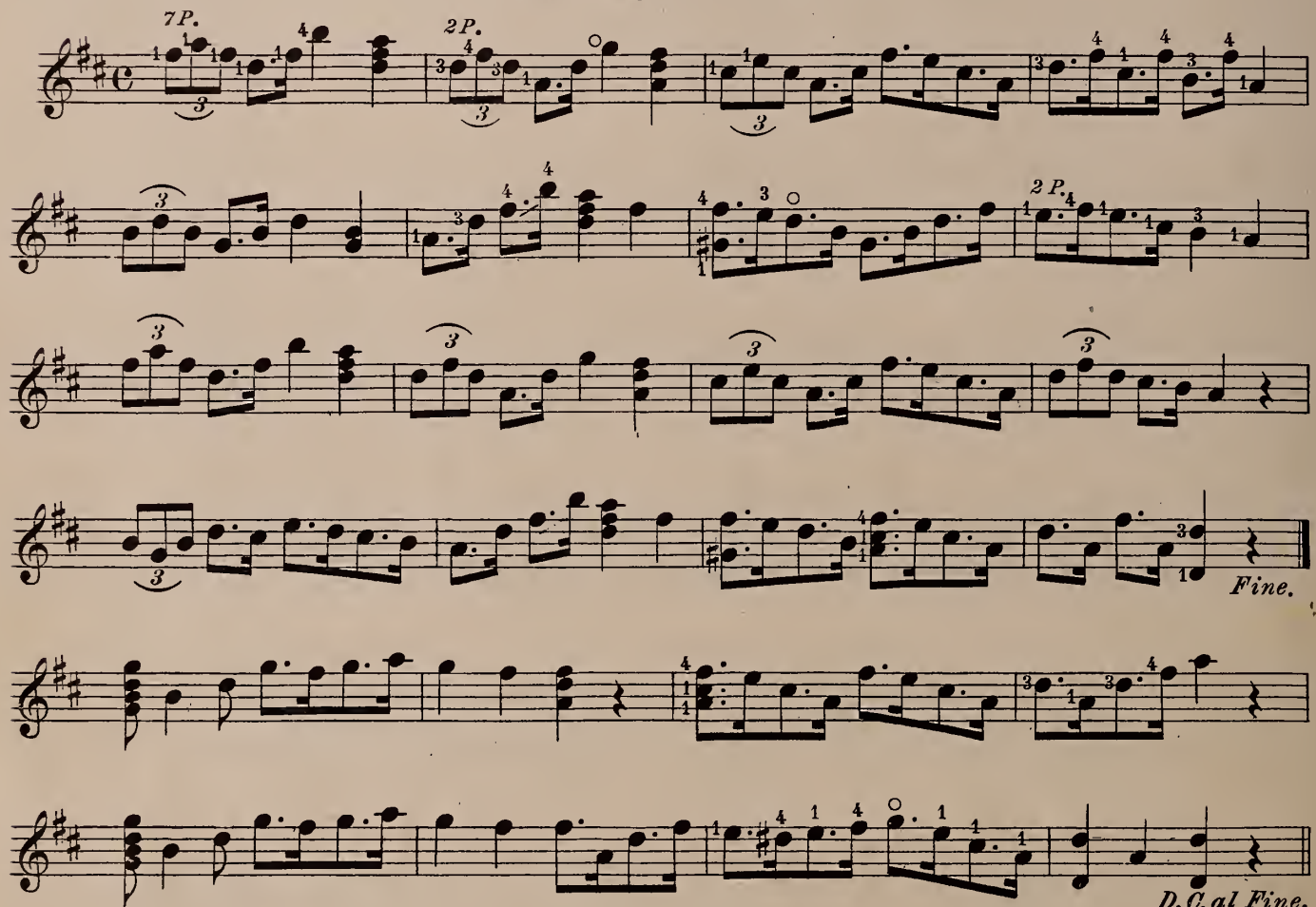
Scale in D Major



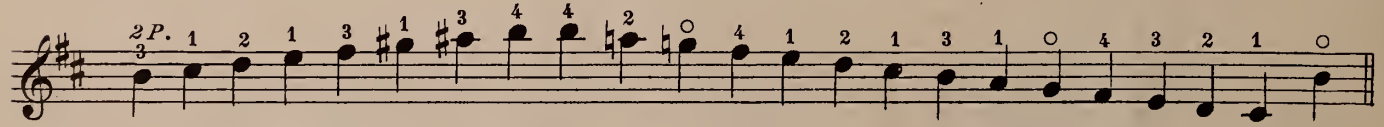
Chords in D Major



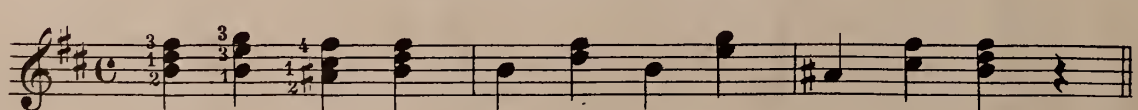
Dancing Shadows



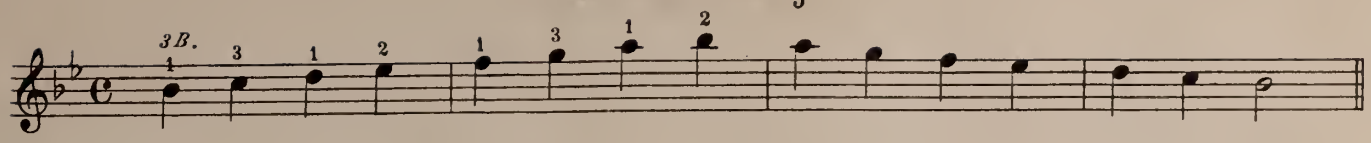
Scale in B Minor



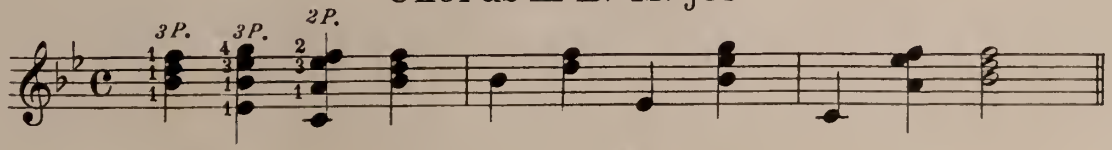
Chords in B Minor



Scale in B♭ Major

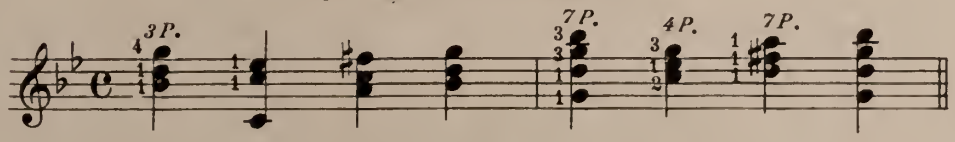


Chords in B♭ Major

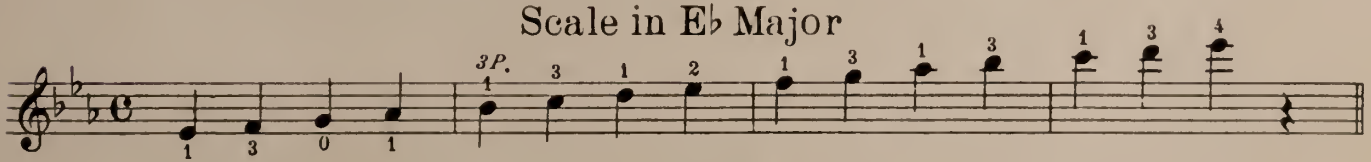


Scale in G Minor

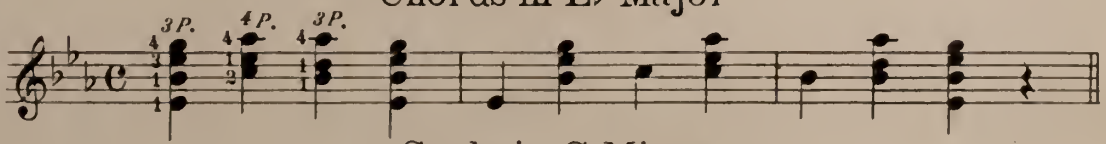
Chords in G Minor



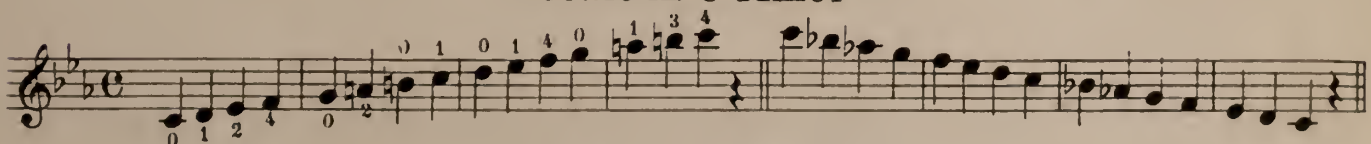
Scale in E♭ Major



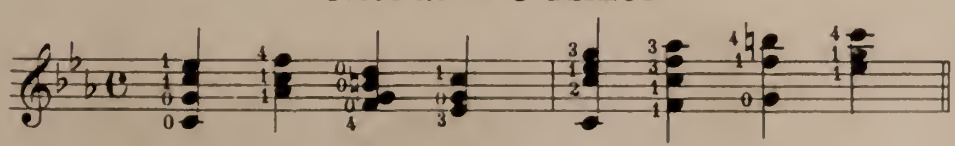
Chords in E♭ Major



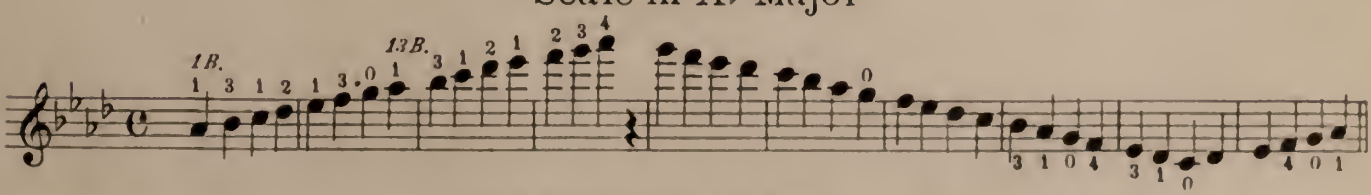
Scale in C Minor



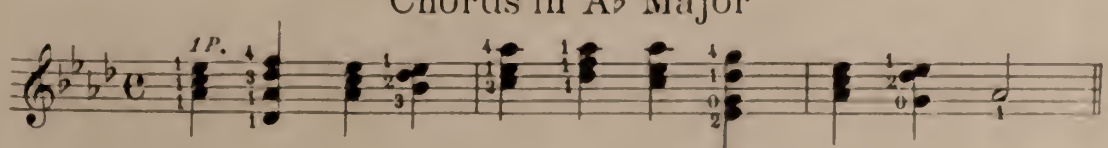
Chords in C Minor



Scale in A♭ Major

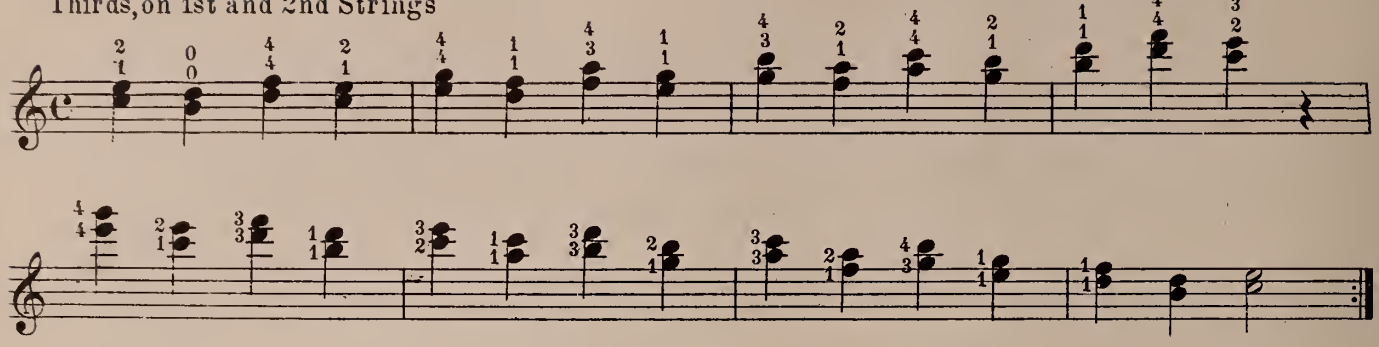


Chords in A♭ Major

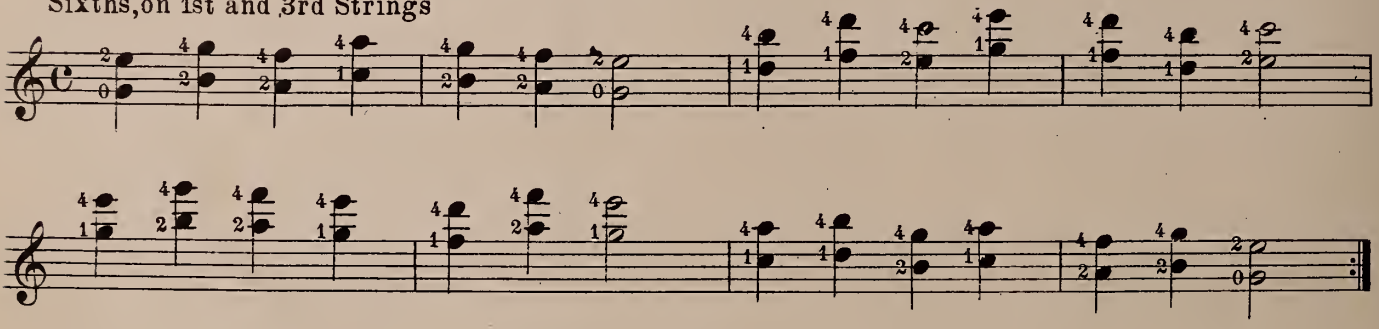


Exercises In Intervals of Thirds, Sixths, Octaves and Tenths

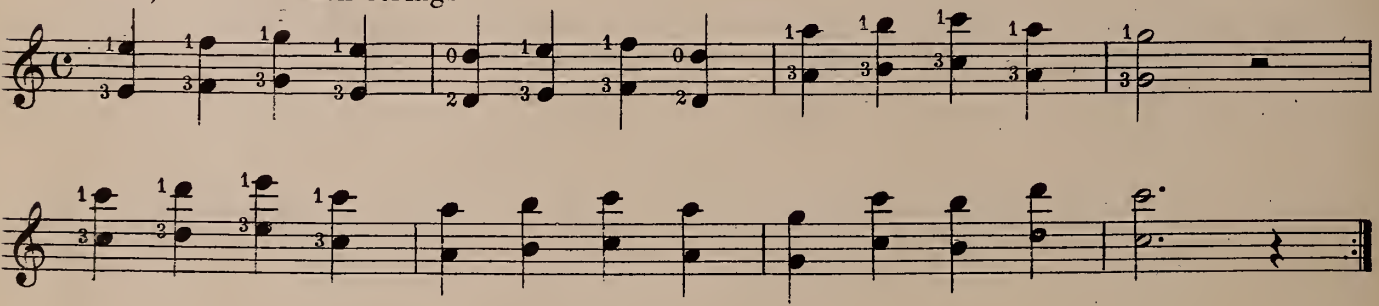
Thirds, on 1st and 2nd Strings



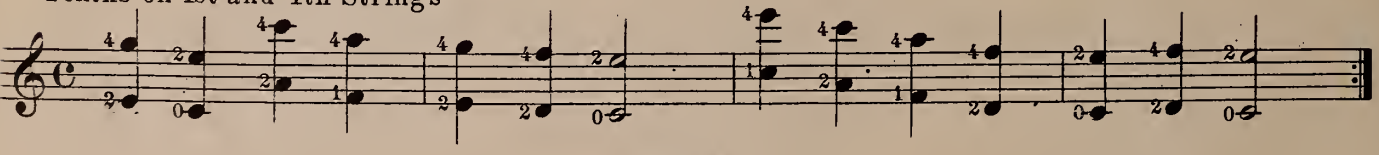
Sixths, on 1st and 3rd Strings



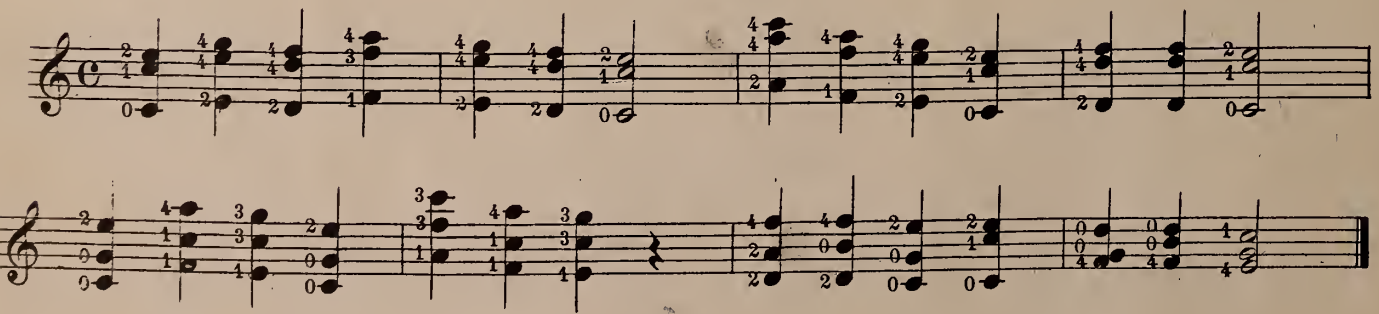
Octaves, on 1st and 4th Strings



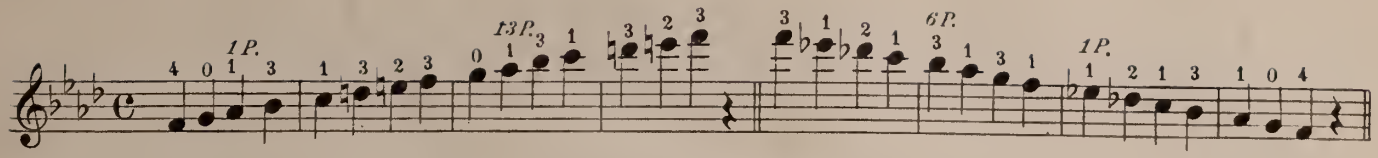
Tenths on 1st and 4th Strings



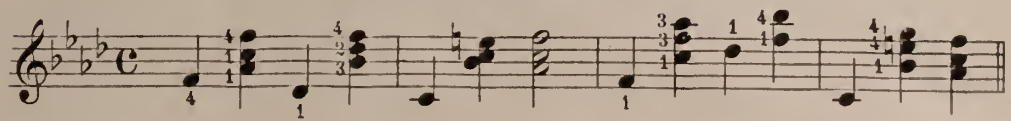
Etude



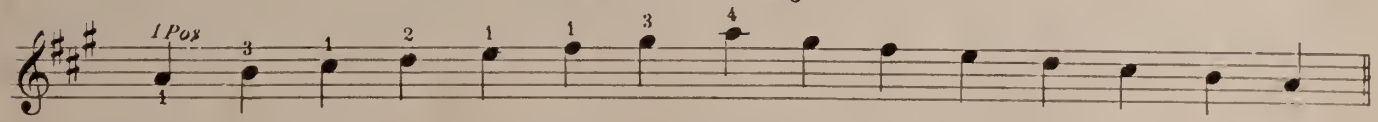
Scale in F Minor



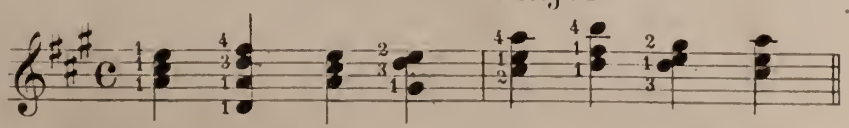
Chords in F Minor



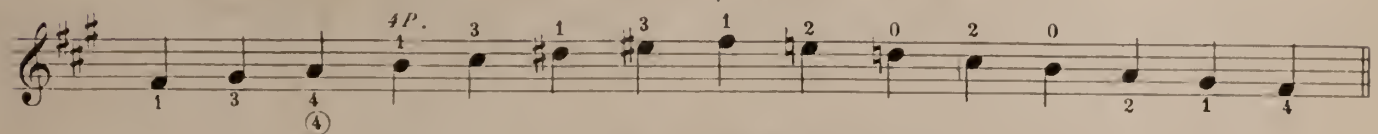
Scale in A Major



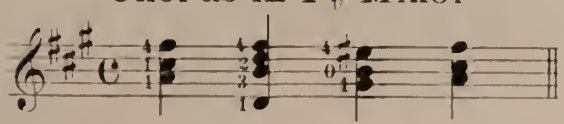
Chords in A Major



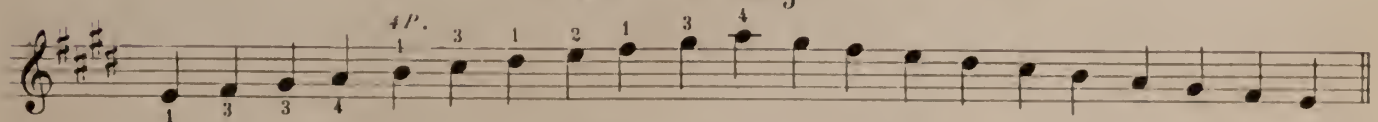
Scale in F♯ Minor



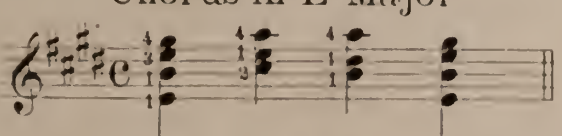
Chords in F♯ Minor



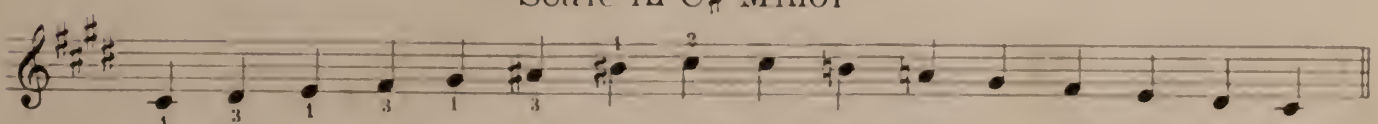
Scale in E Major



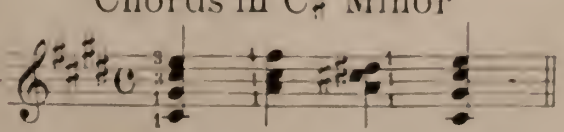
Chords in E Major



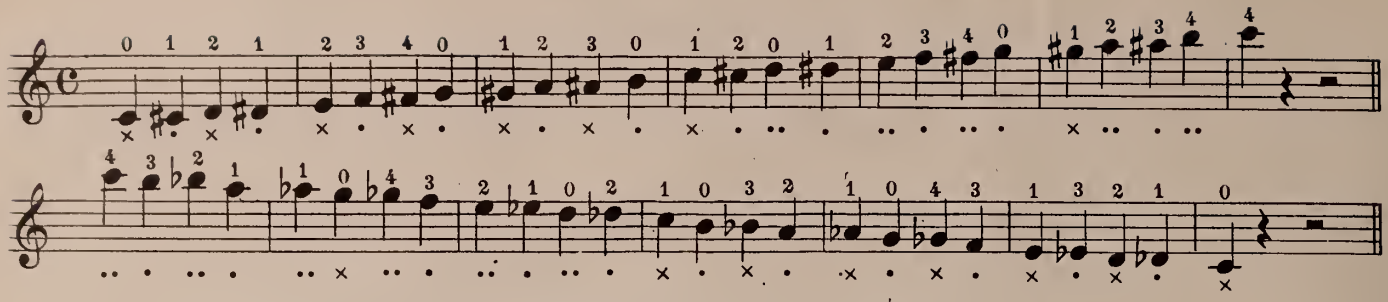
Scale in C♯ Minor



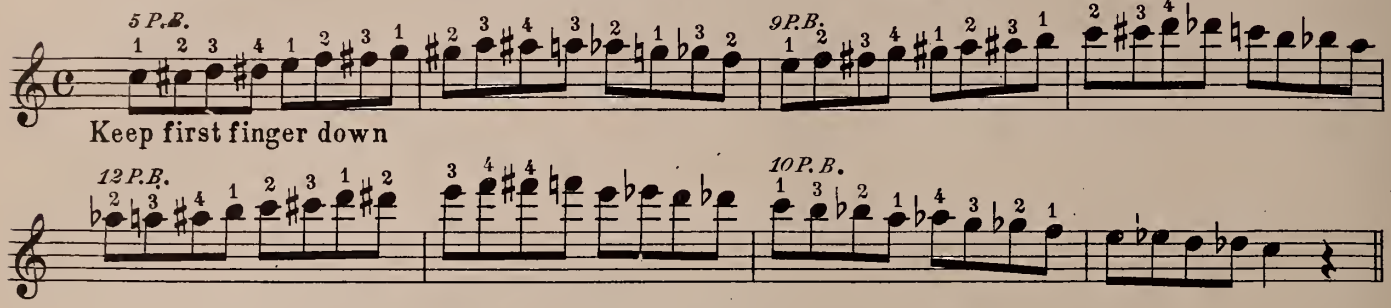
Chords in C♯ Minor



The Chromatic Scale



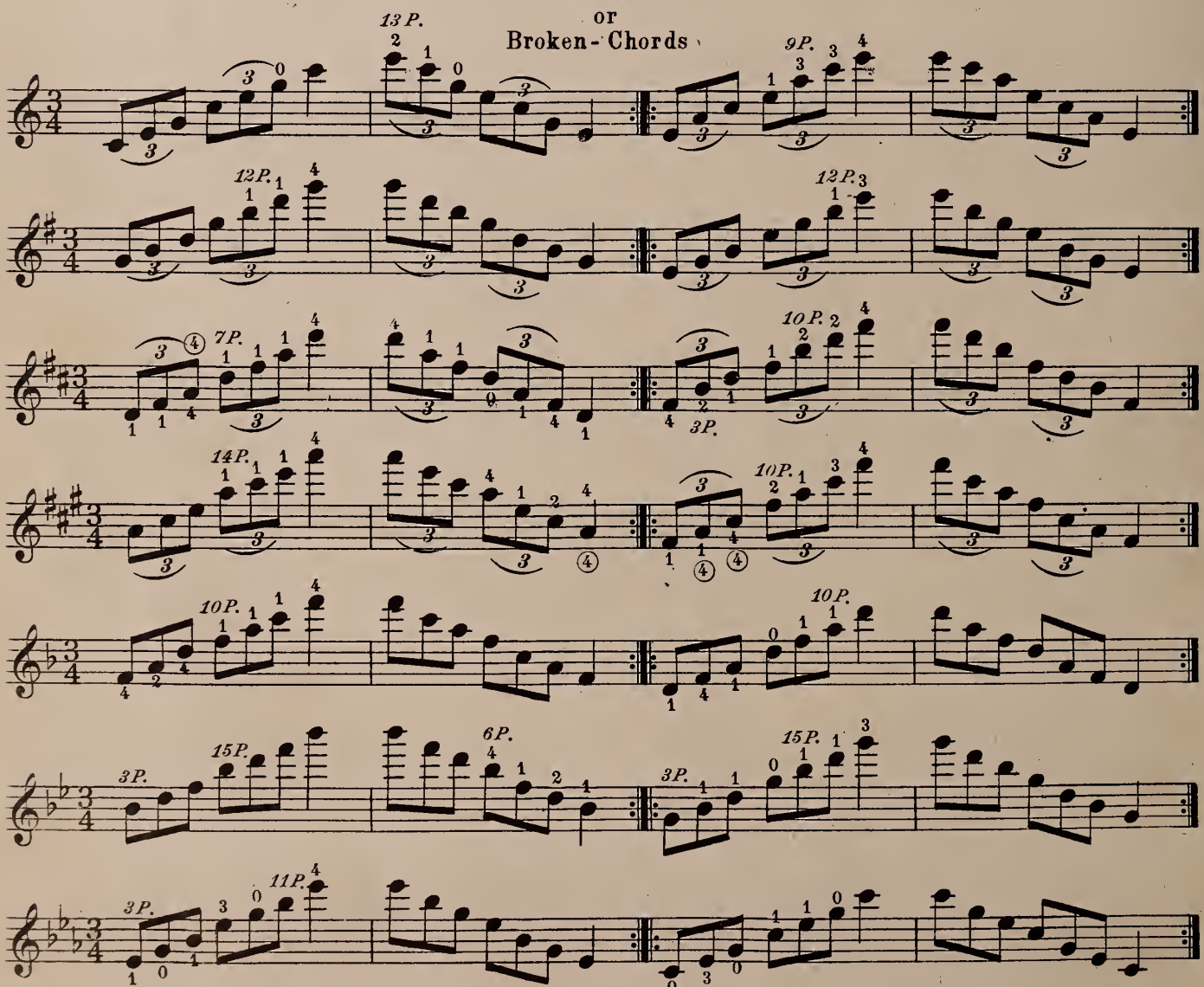
Chromatic Scale In Positions



Arpeggios

or

Broken-Chords



The Tremolo

The Tremolo movement is the nearest approach to a sustained tone possible on the Banjo. When artistically performed it is very effective.

In playing Tremolo, rest the third finger of the right hand on the head about three inches from the bridge, elevate the hand so that only the point of the firs finger will touch the strings.

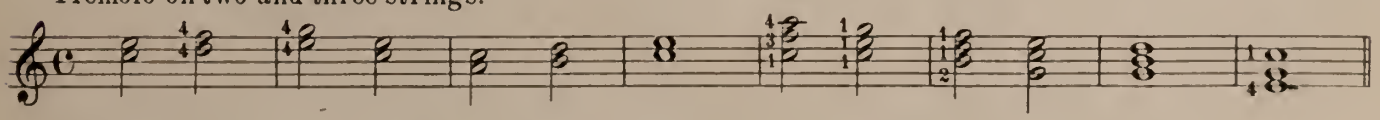
The motion of the first finger should be forward and backward very fast on one, two or three strings according to the number of notes written.

The notes with stems turned up are made tremolo, those turned down are all picked with the thumb as an accompaniment. When the tremolo is to be played without thumb accompaniment the stems may be written as usual.

Exercise

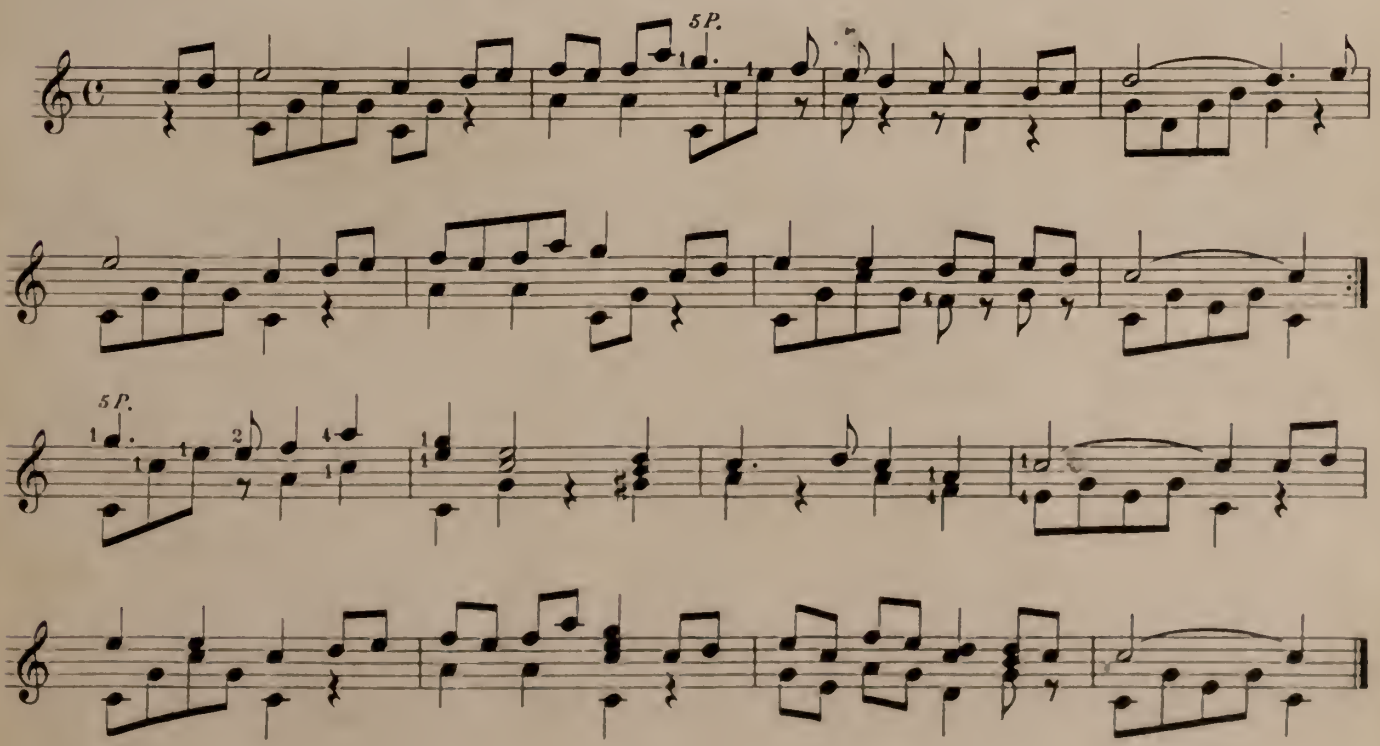
Tremolo on single strings.

Tremolo on two and three strings.



Melody With Accompaniment

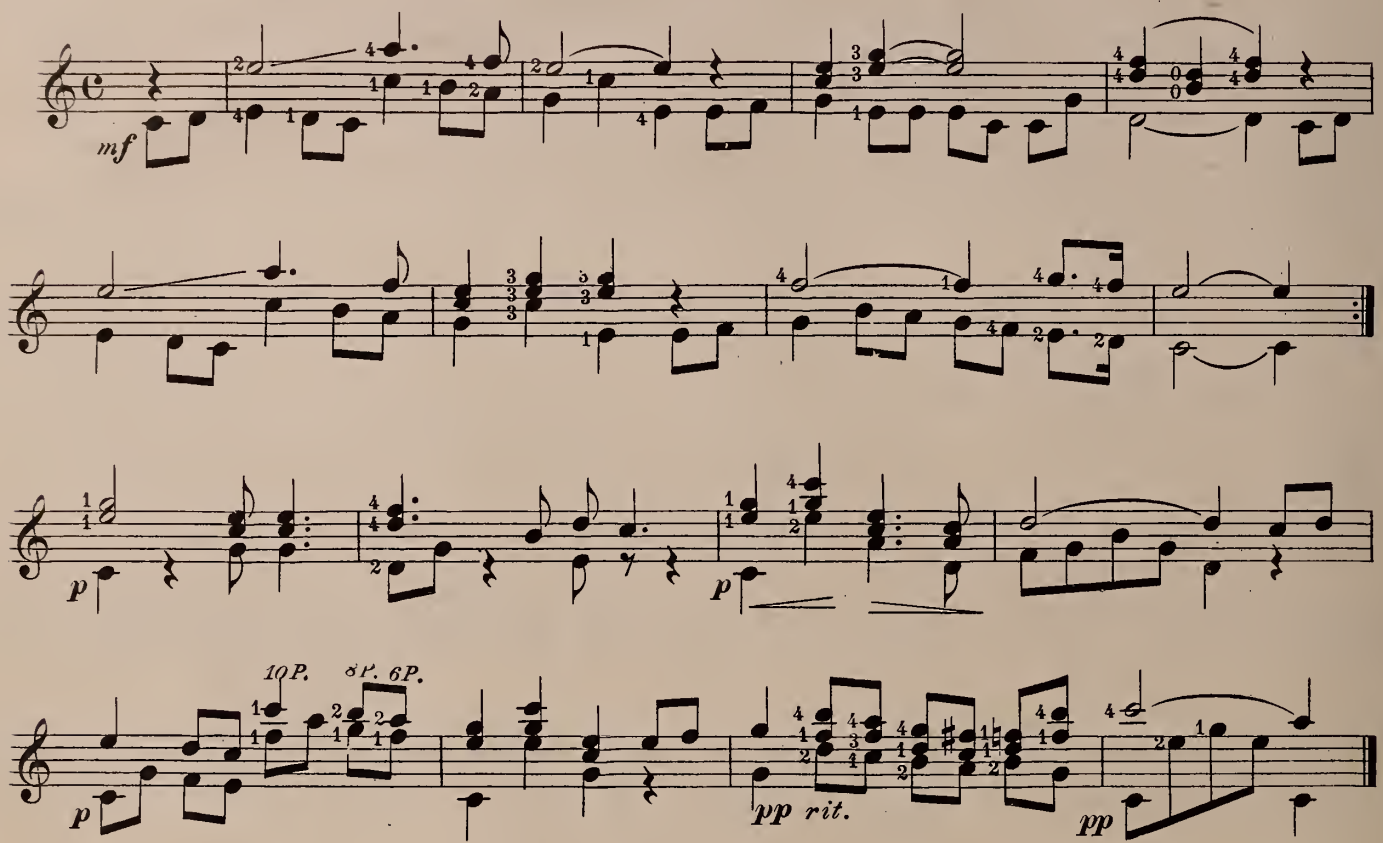
My Old Kentucky Home



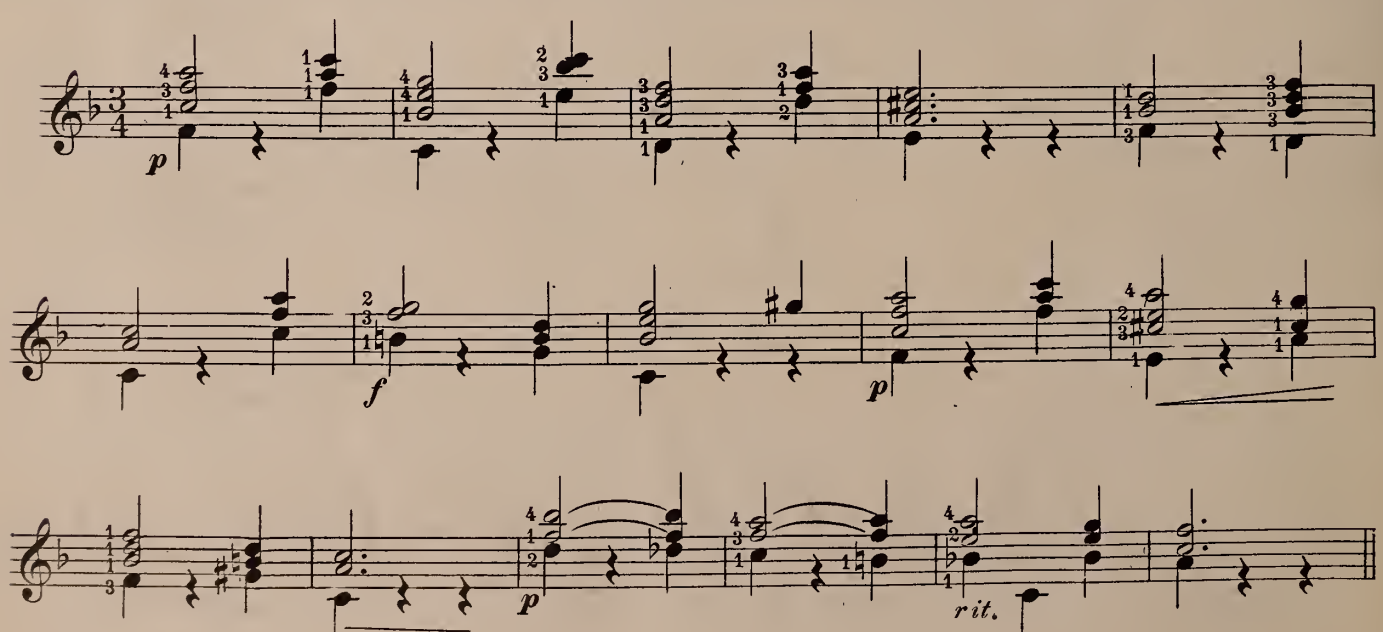
Song Without Words

TREMOLO STYLE

In the first part the melody is to be played with the thumb, therefor play the tremoloed accompaniment very softly. In the second strain play tremoloed notes louder picking the thumb notes softly.



Etude in Chords

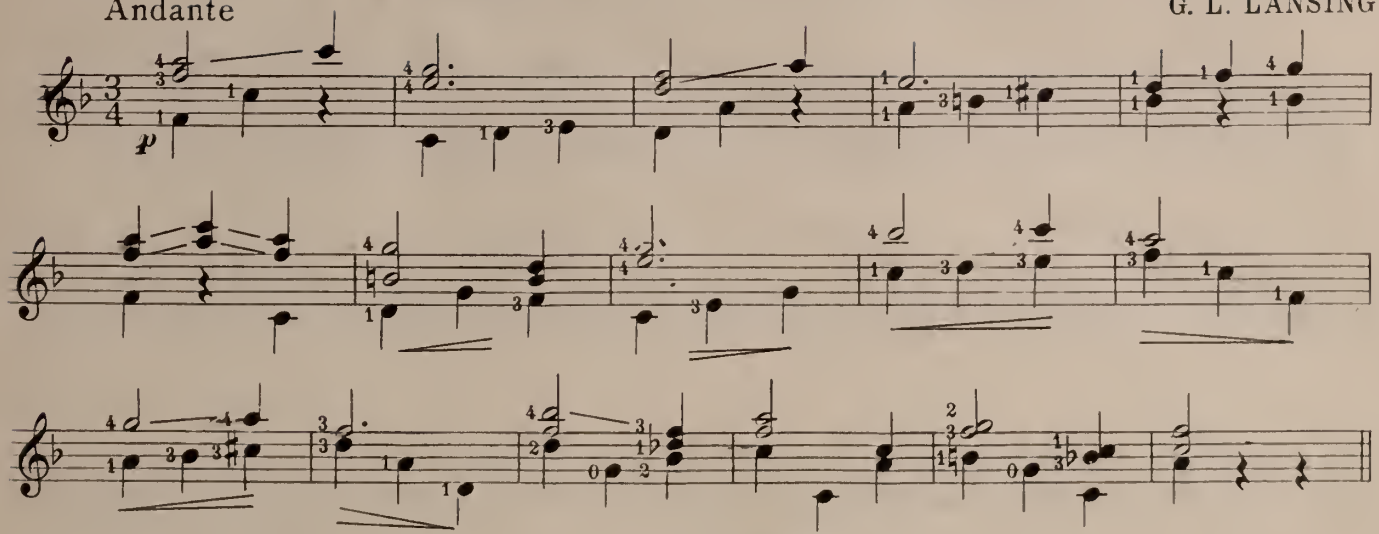


Serenade

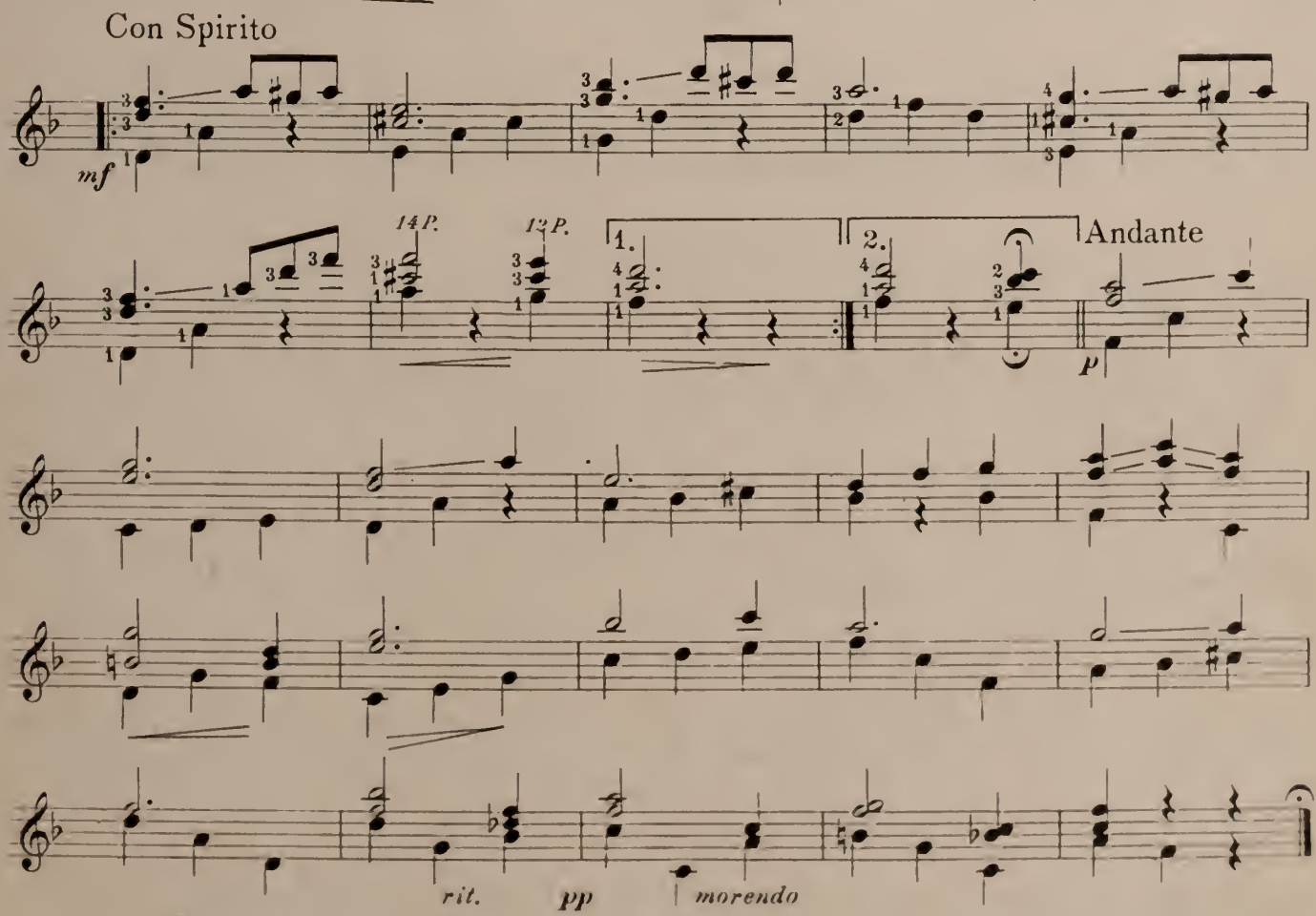
Tremolo

Andante

G. L. LANSING

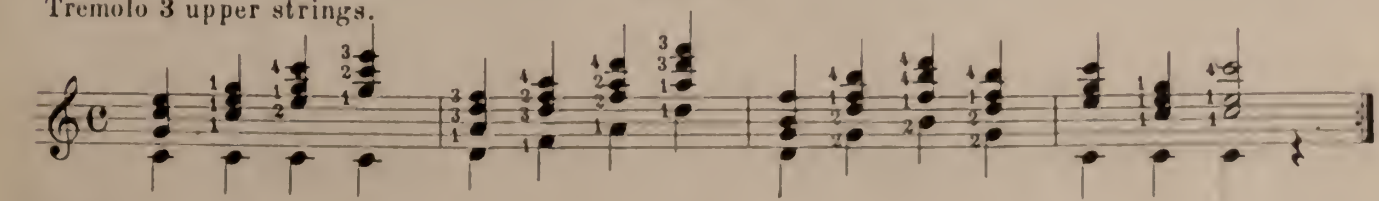


Con Spirito



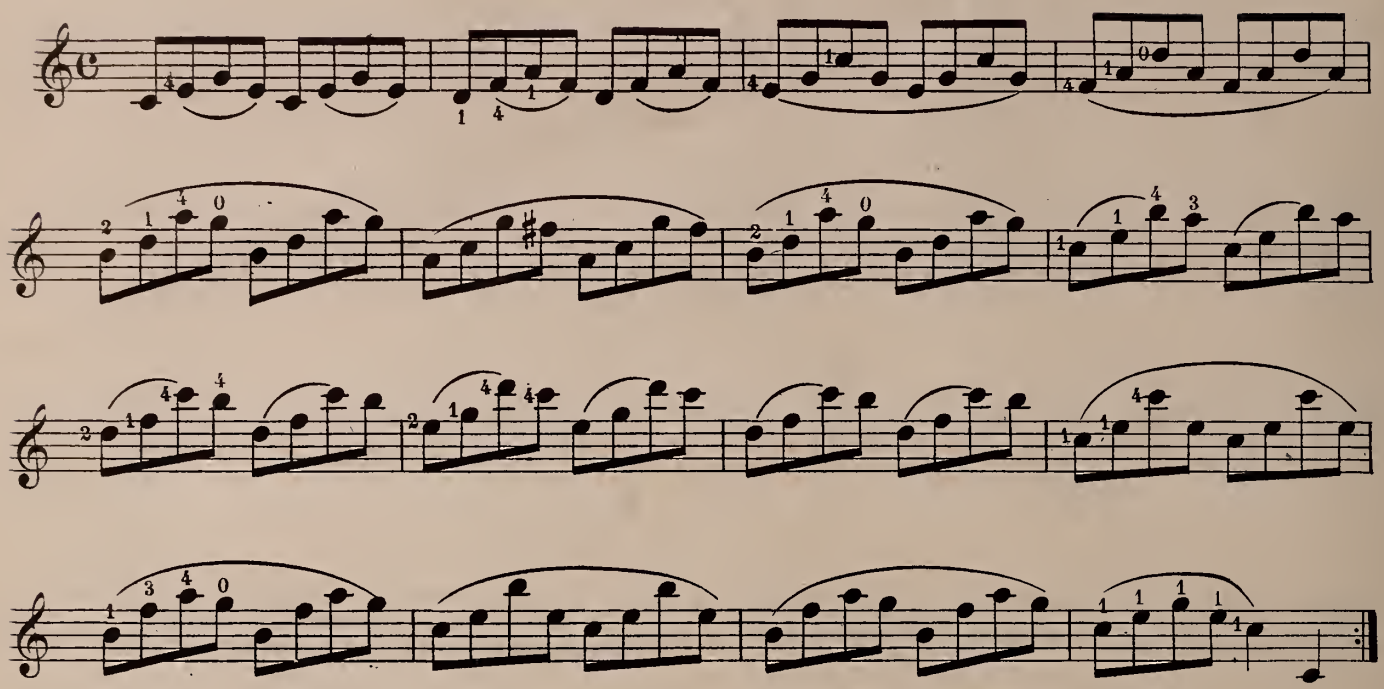
Etude

Tremolo 3 upper strings.

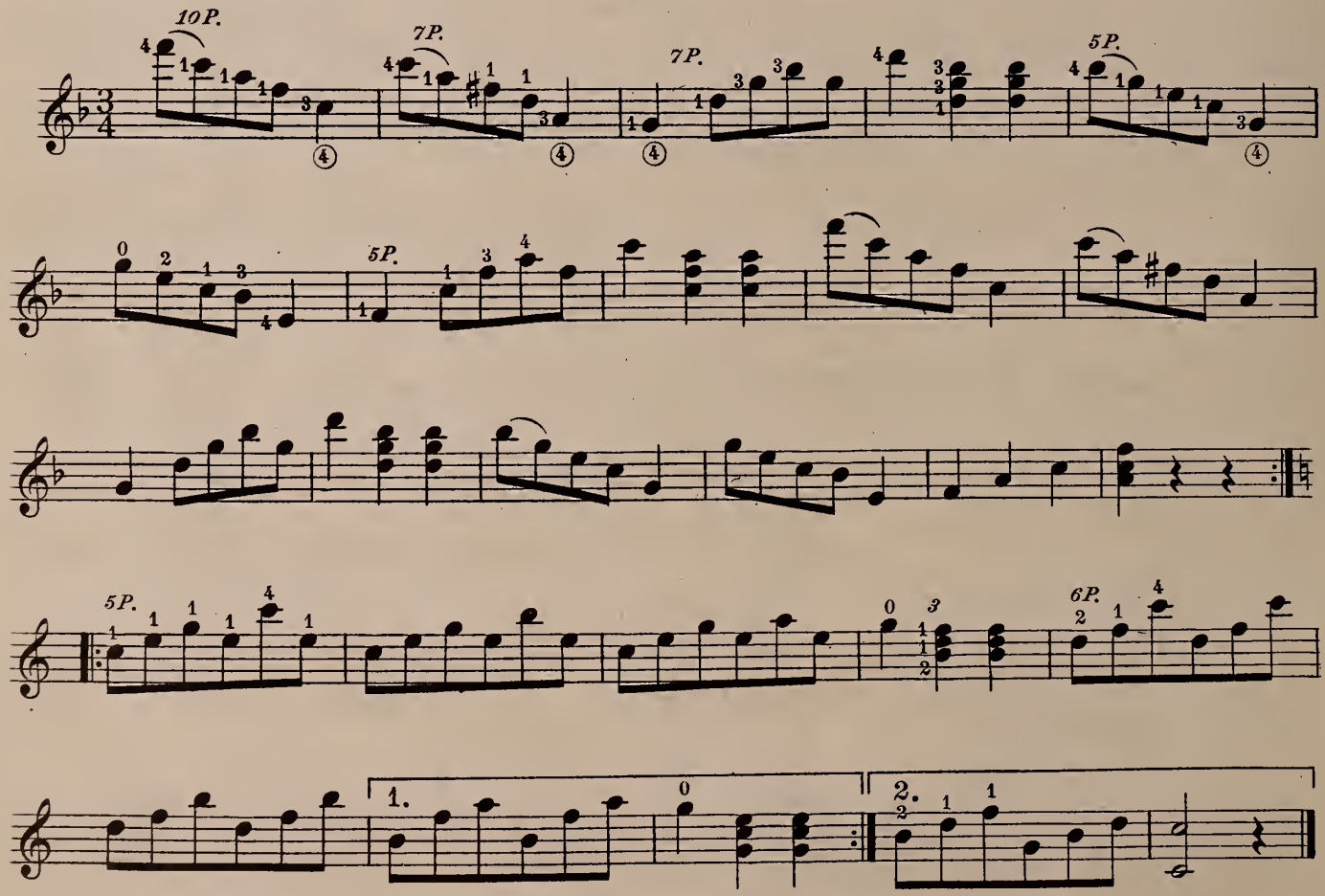


Exercise For Stretching The Fingers

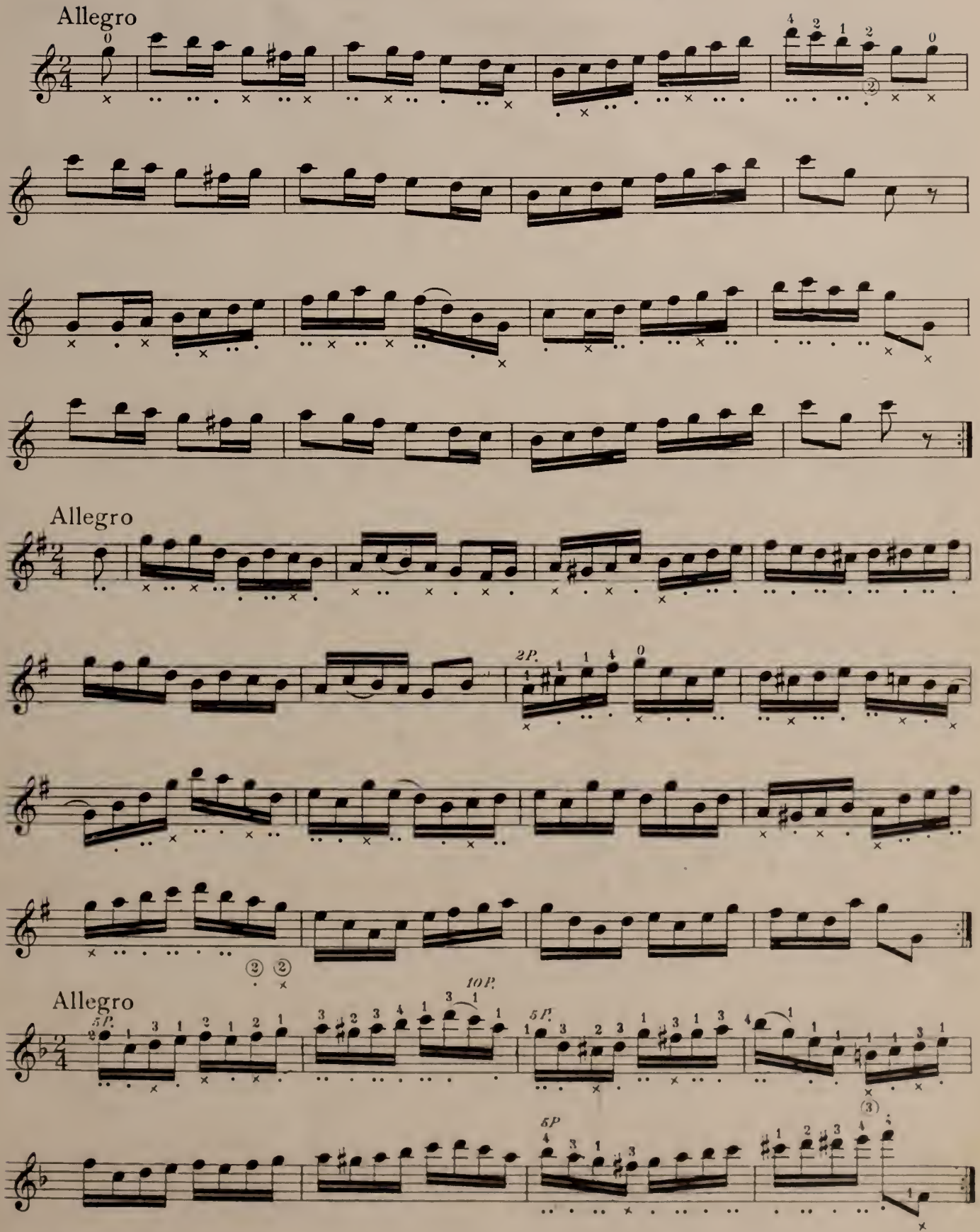
The fingers should be kept down throughout the duration of each slur.



Etude



Exercises For Rapid Fingering



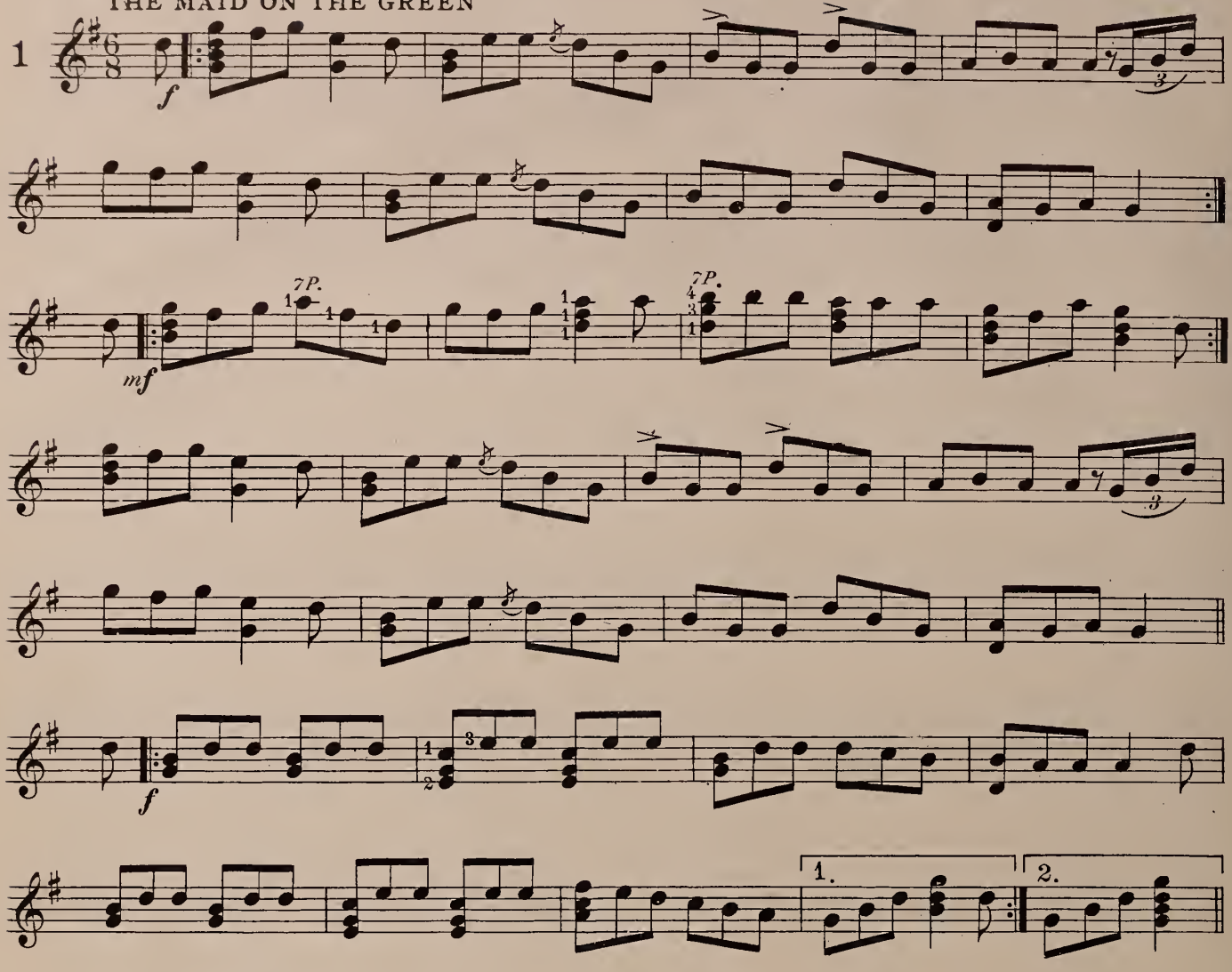
Old Town Medley

(Virginia Reel)

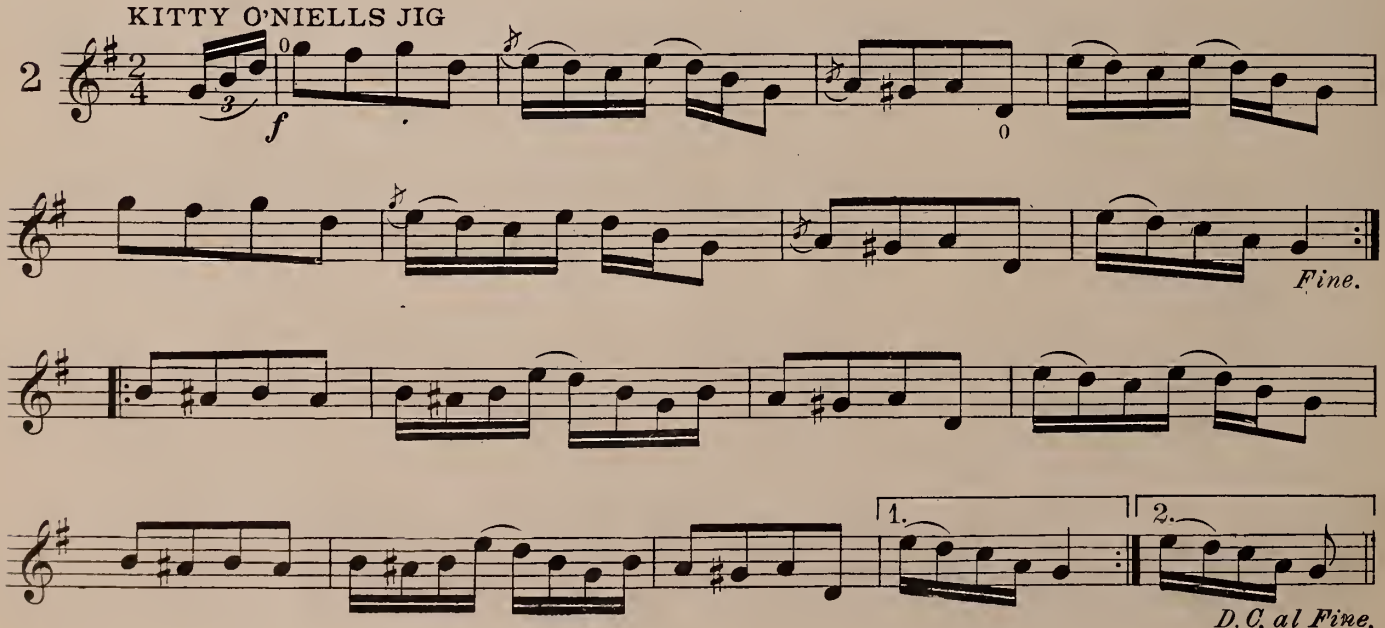
Arr. by G. L. LANSING
(for this work)

Elevate 4th String

THE MAID ON THE GREEN



KITTY O'NIELLS JIG



3 MARCH

ff

4 THE SKIPPERS REEL

f

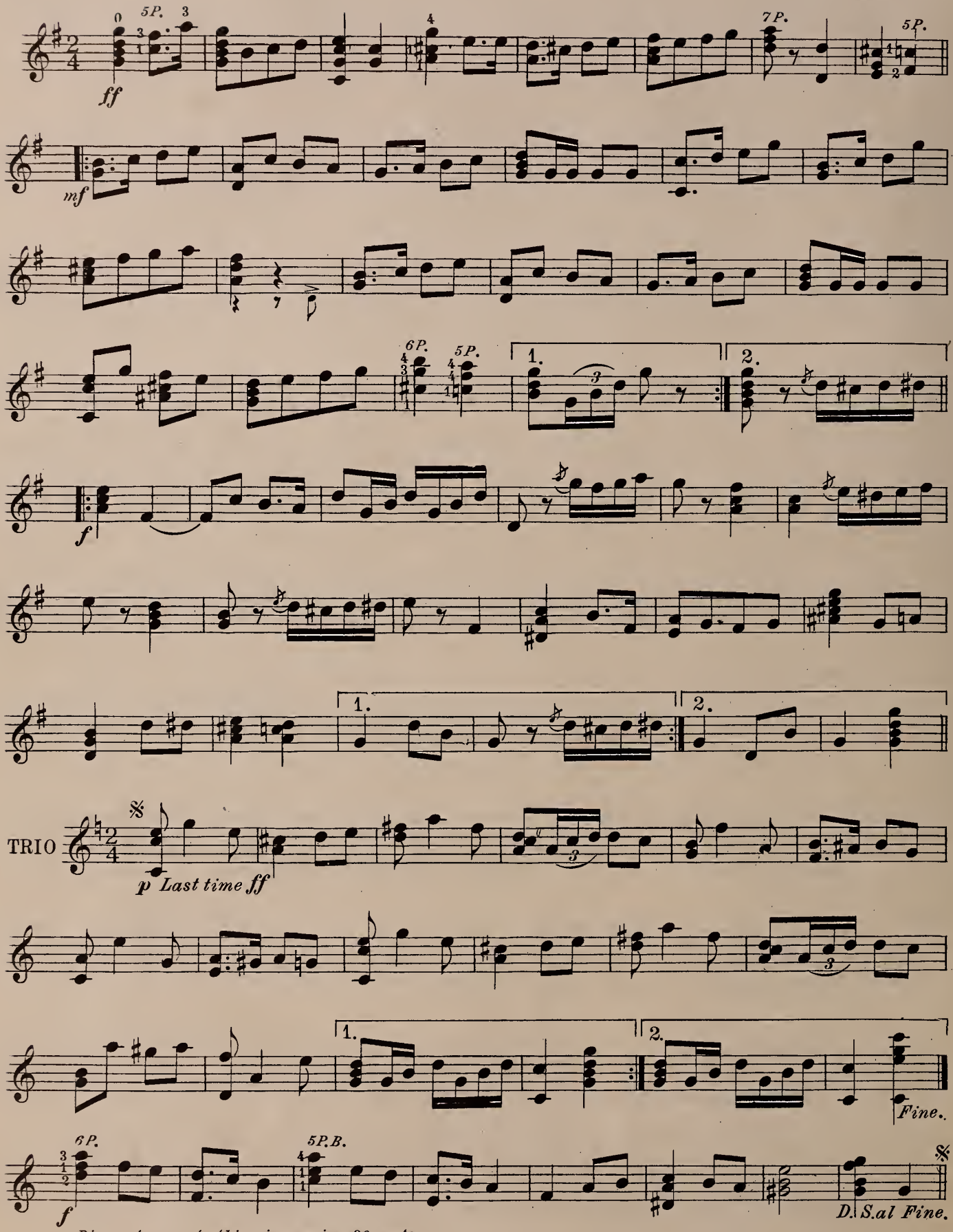
fz

4P.

The Chieftain

March and Two-Step

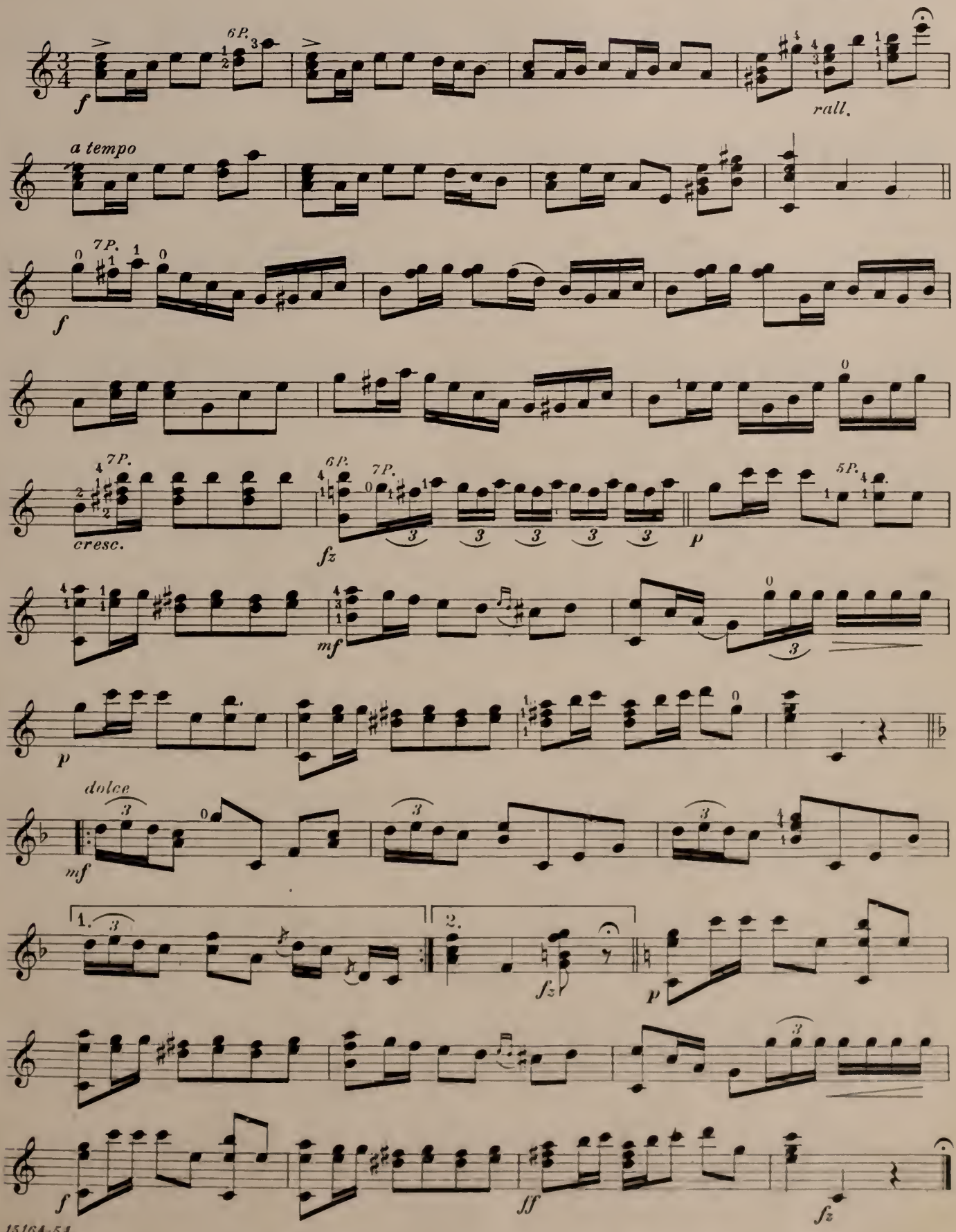
GEO L. LANSING



Piano Accomp. to this piece price 20 cents

Bolero Mexicana

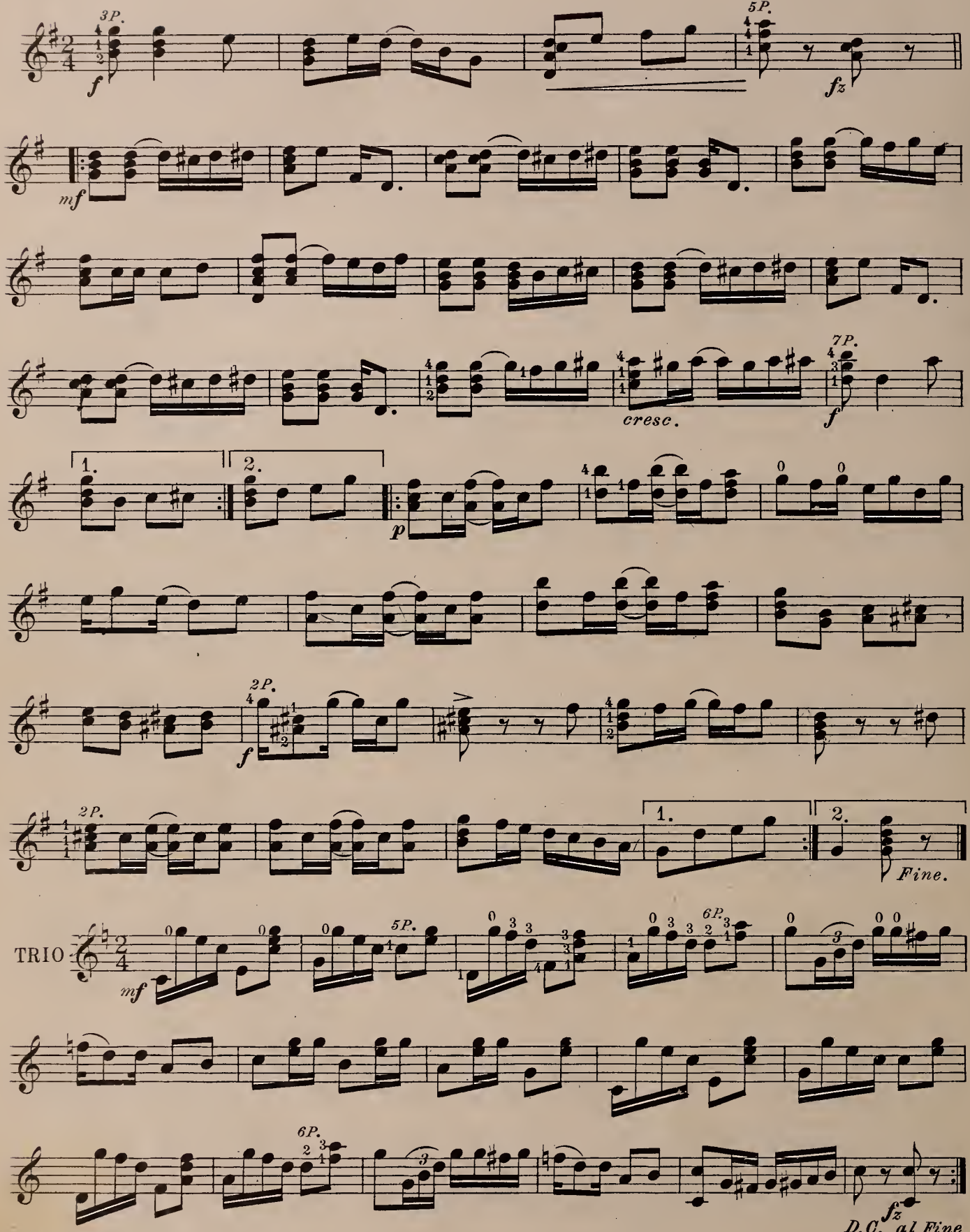
JOSE MARTINEZ



A Georgia Glide

(Strut)

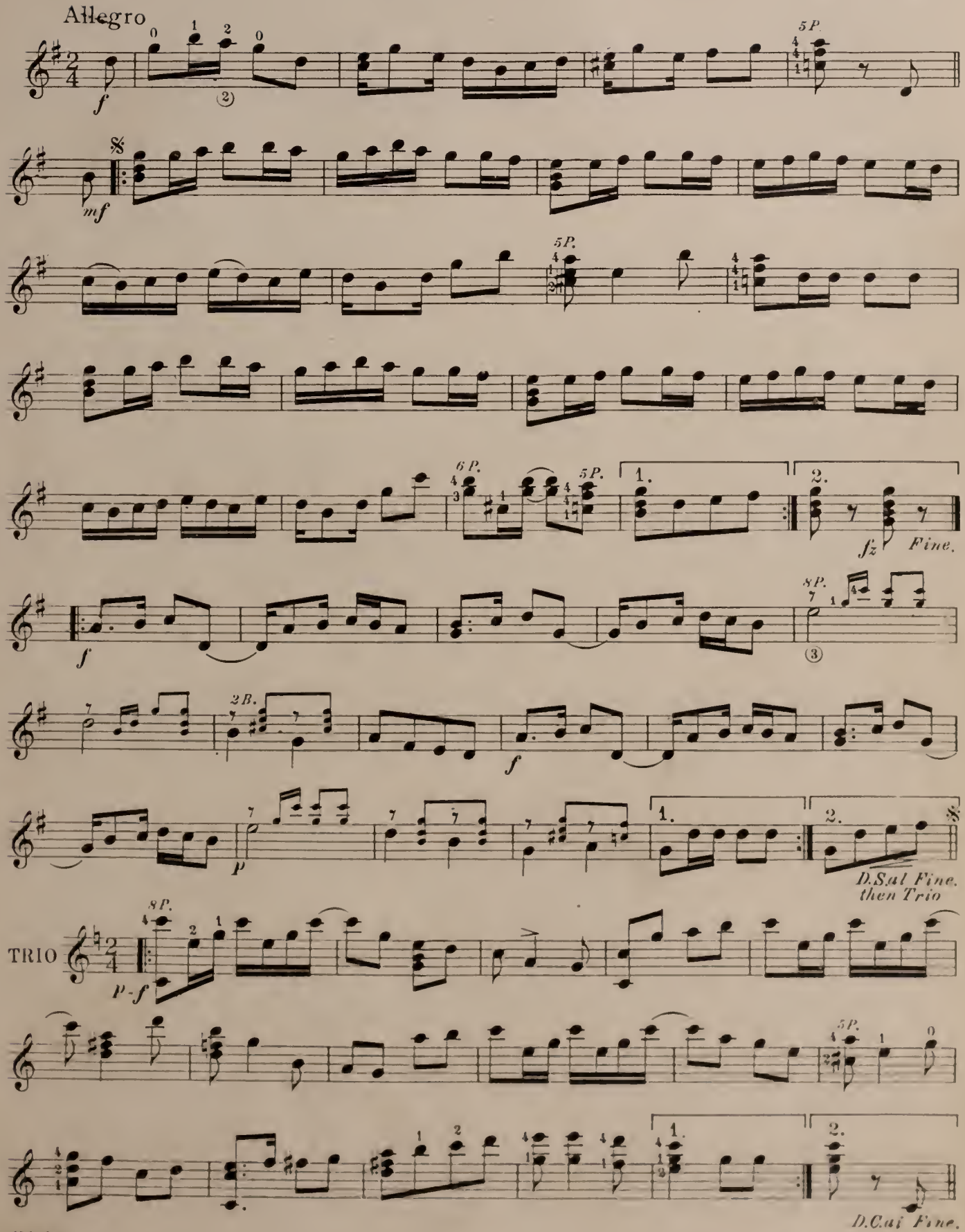
G. L. LANSING



In Banjo Land

Characteristic

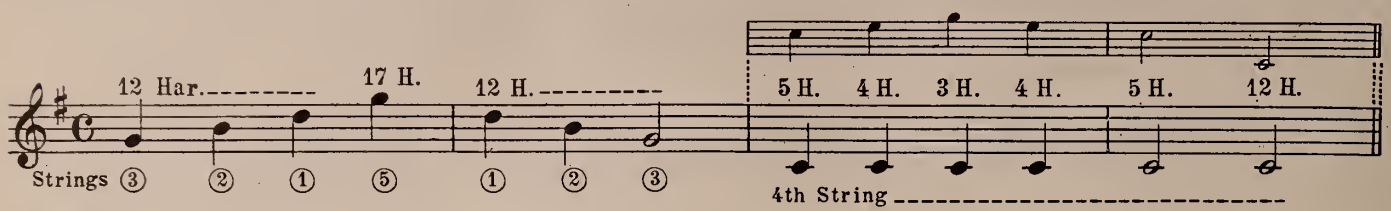
G. L. LANSING



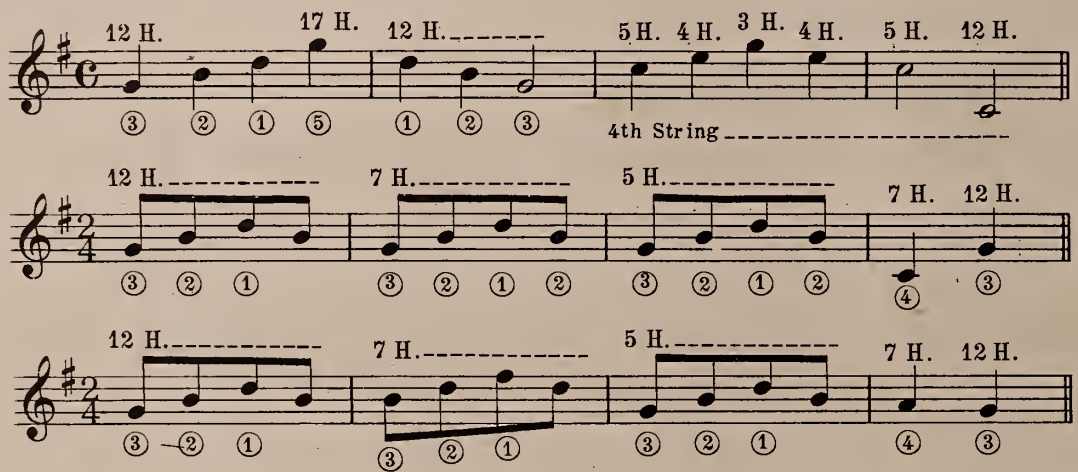
Harmonics

The Harmonic Tones on the Banjo are found at the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 12th, 16th and 19th Frets on the four regular Strings, and on the 17th Fret of the 5th String. They are made by laying a Finger (usually the 3rd) over the Fret designated. Do not press down, but lay the Fingers lightly on the Strings and pick firmly. The Left Hand should be raised immediately after picking the Harmonic.

Exercise



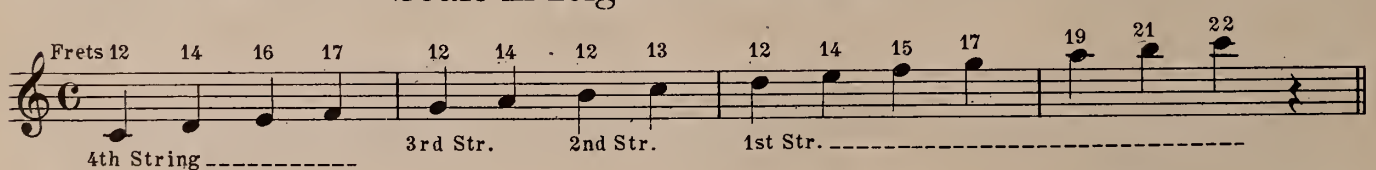
Some writers indicate the Notes in Harmonics on Open Strings for all Notes at the 12th Fret and write all others as though they were the regular Tones produced.



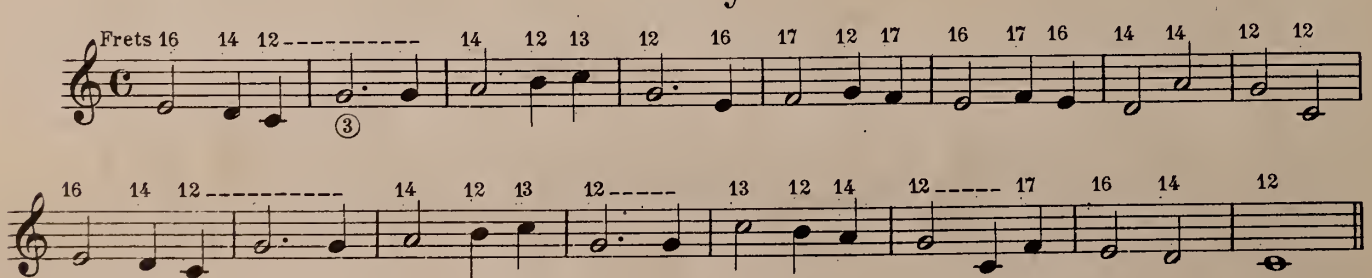
Right Hand Harmonics

When Right Hand Harmonics are well executed the effect is beautiful. To do this well requires much patient practice. The 1st Finger of the Right Hand should be *arched* so that the point lays on the String at the required Fret, the String being picked with the Thumb underneath. Form the Harmonic as far away from the 12th Fret as the Note required is from the Nut, for instance if C is desired, simply lay the tip of 1st Finger over 4th String at 12th Fret and pick the String with the Thumb. If D is desired, finger it with the Left Hand as usual and form the Harmonic at the 14th Fret.

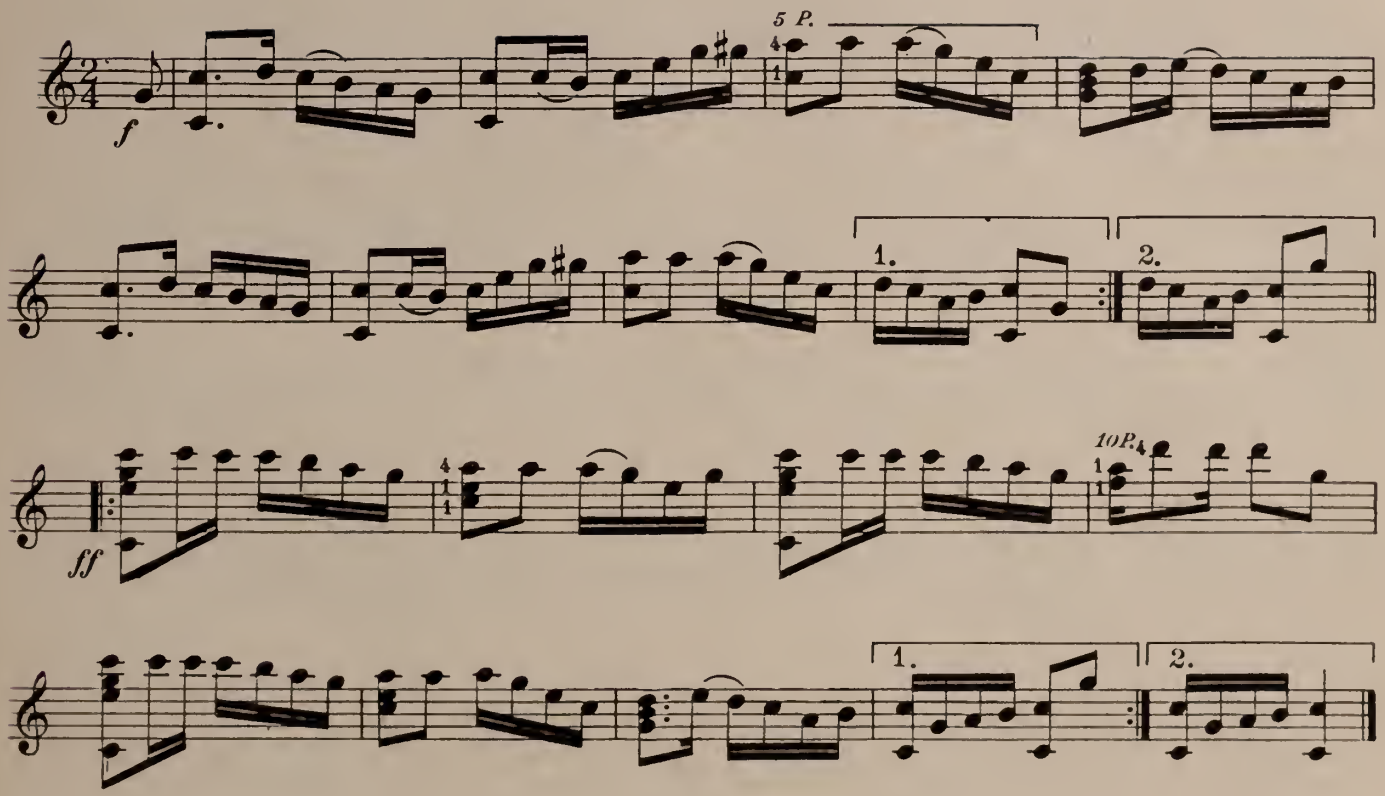
Scale in Right Hand Harmonics



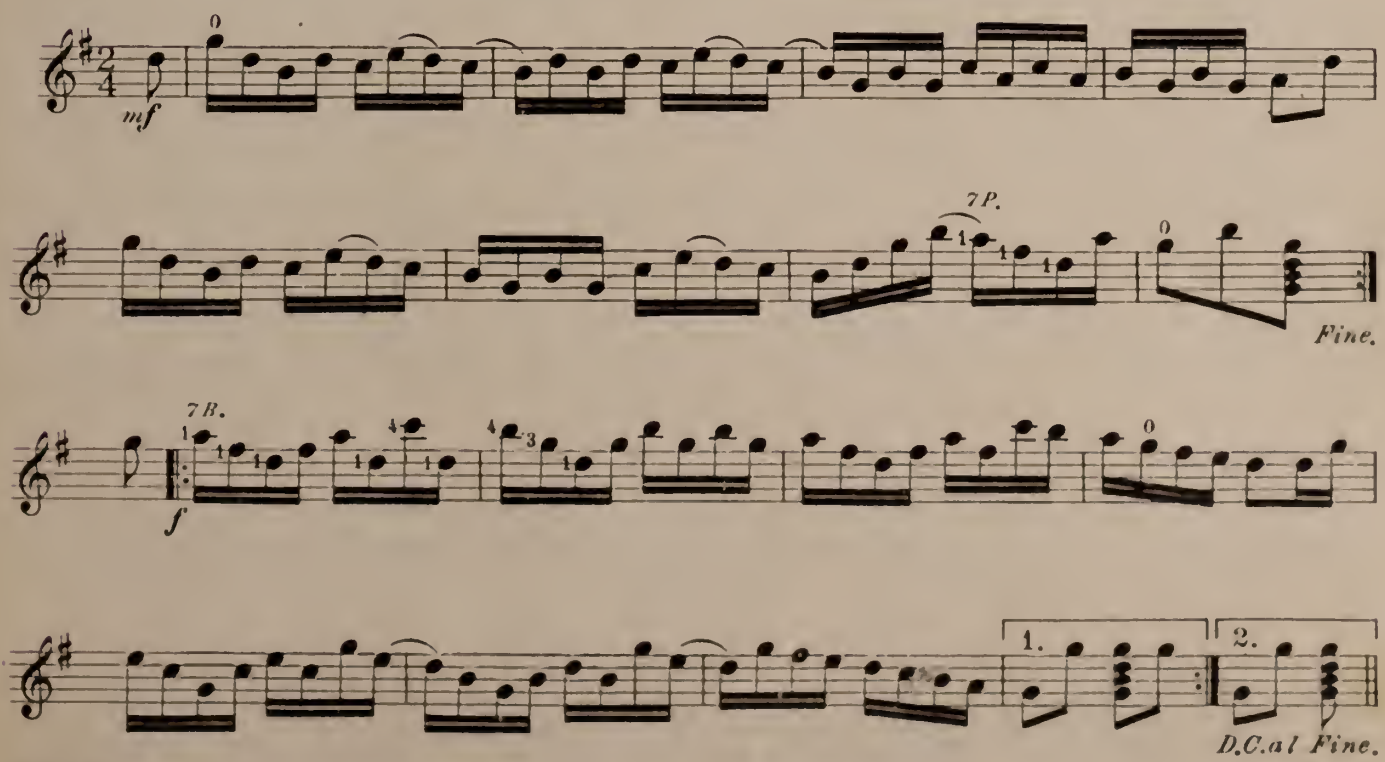
Melody



Old Time Reel



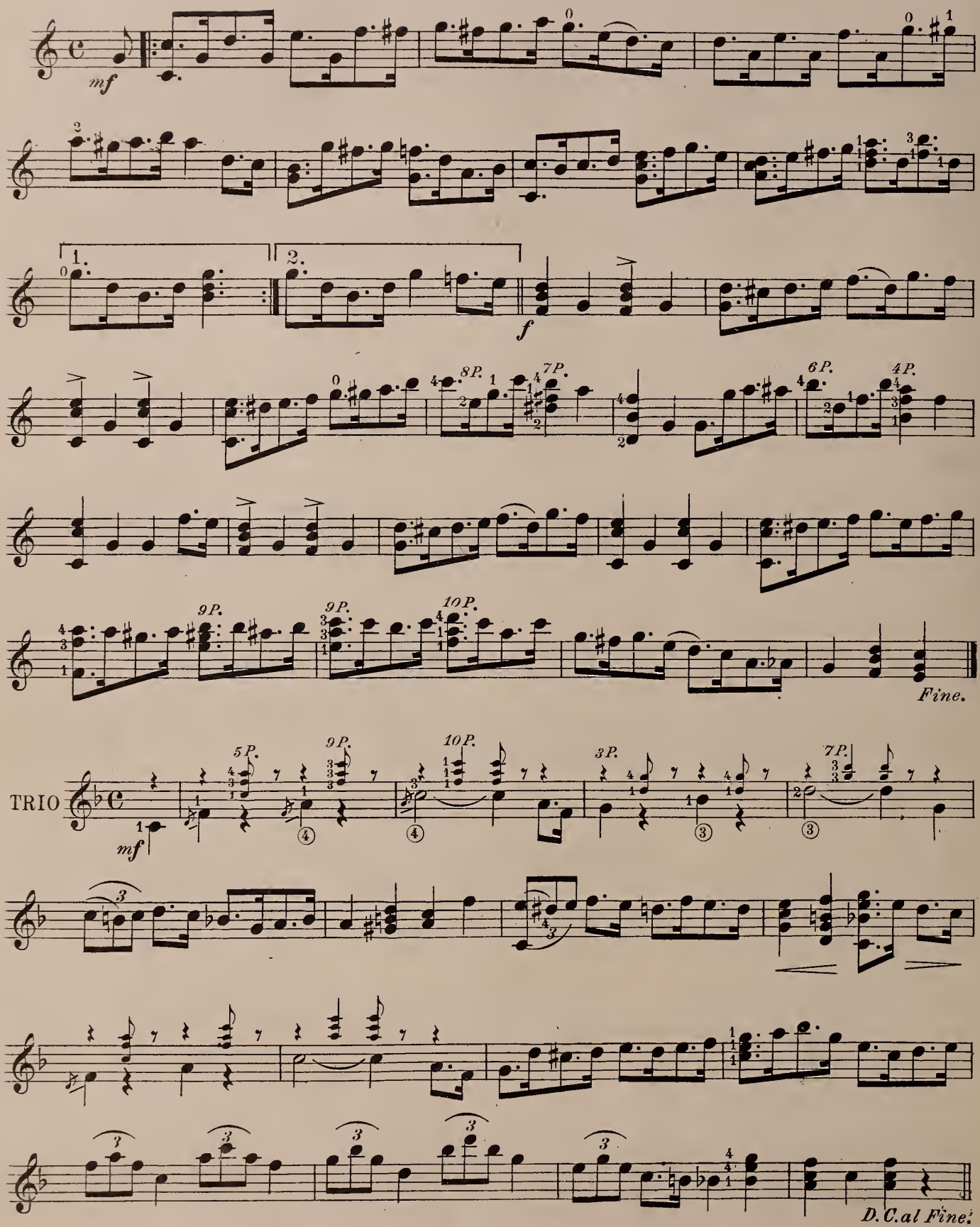
Fishers' Hornpipe



Dixie Maid

Fox Trot

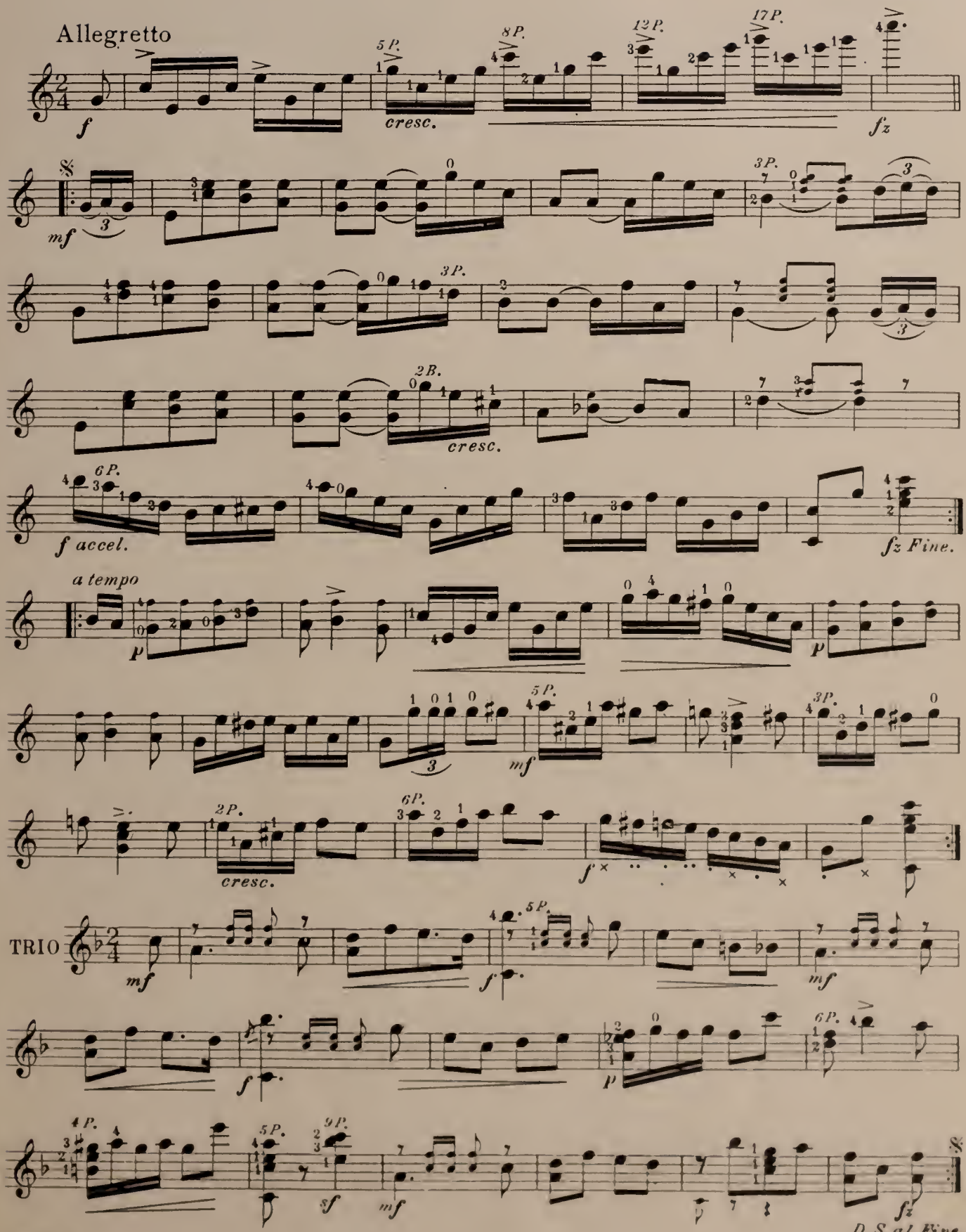
LEO CATLIN



Iona

Intermezzo

G. L. LANSING

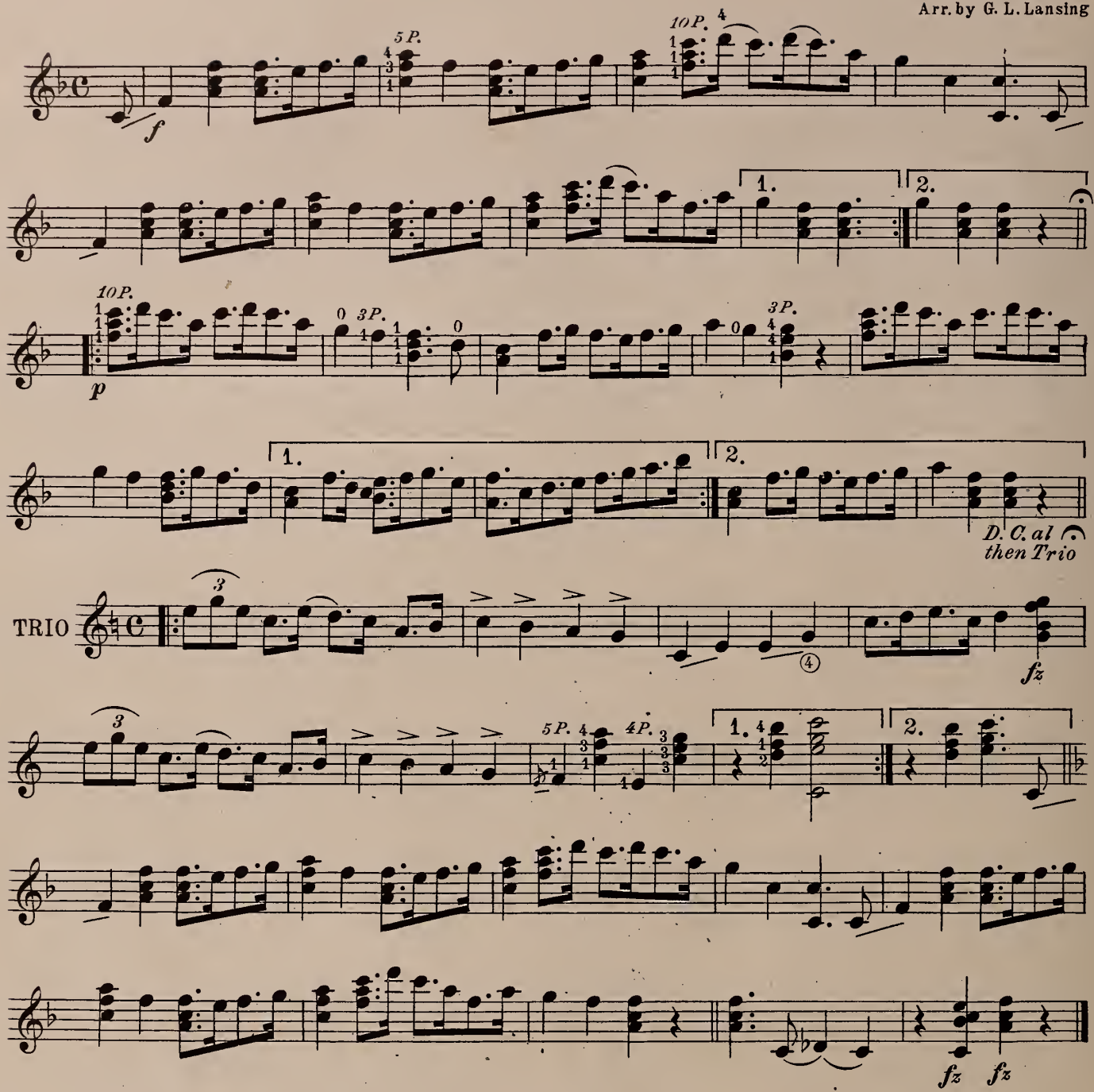


Old Pennyroyal

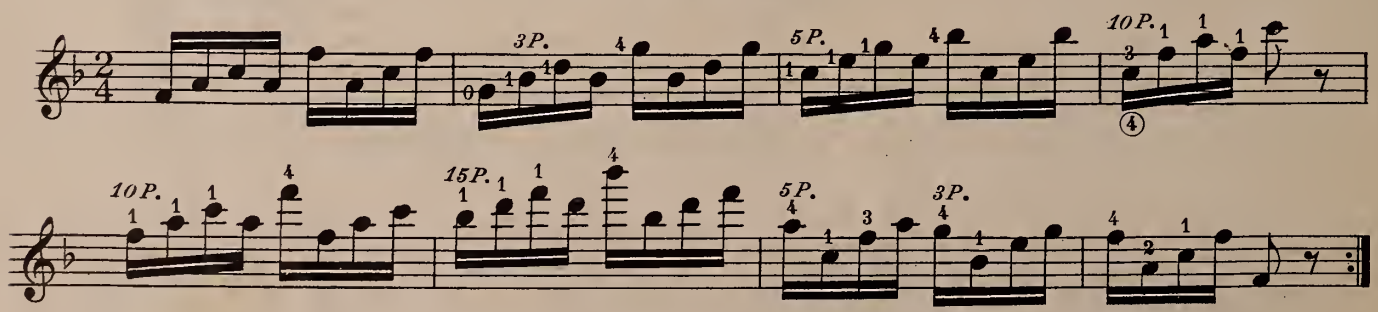
(Country Dance)

SI STEBBINS

Arr. by G. L. Lansing



Etude in F Major

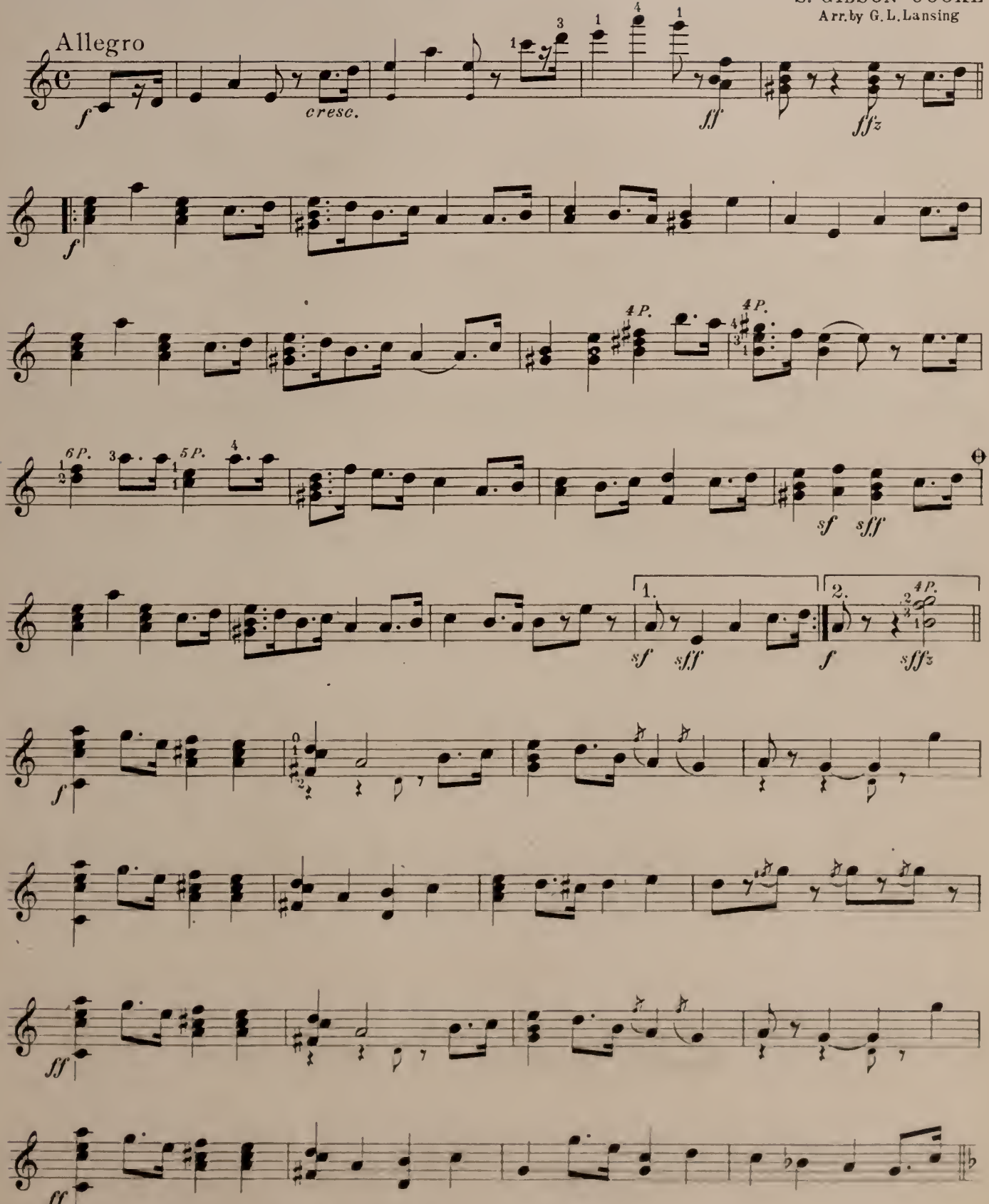


Wooden Shoes

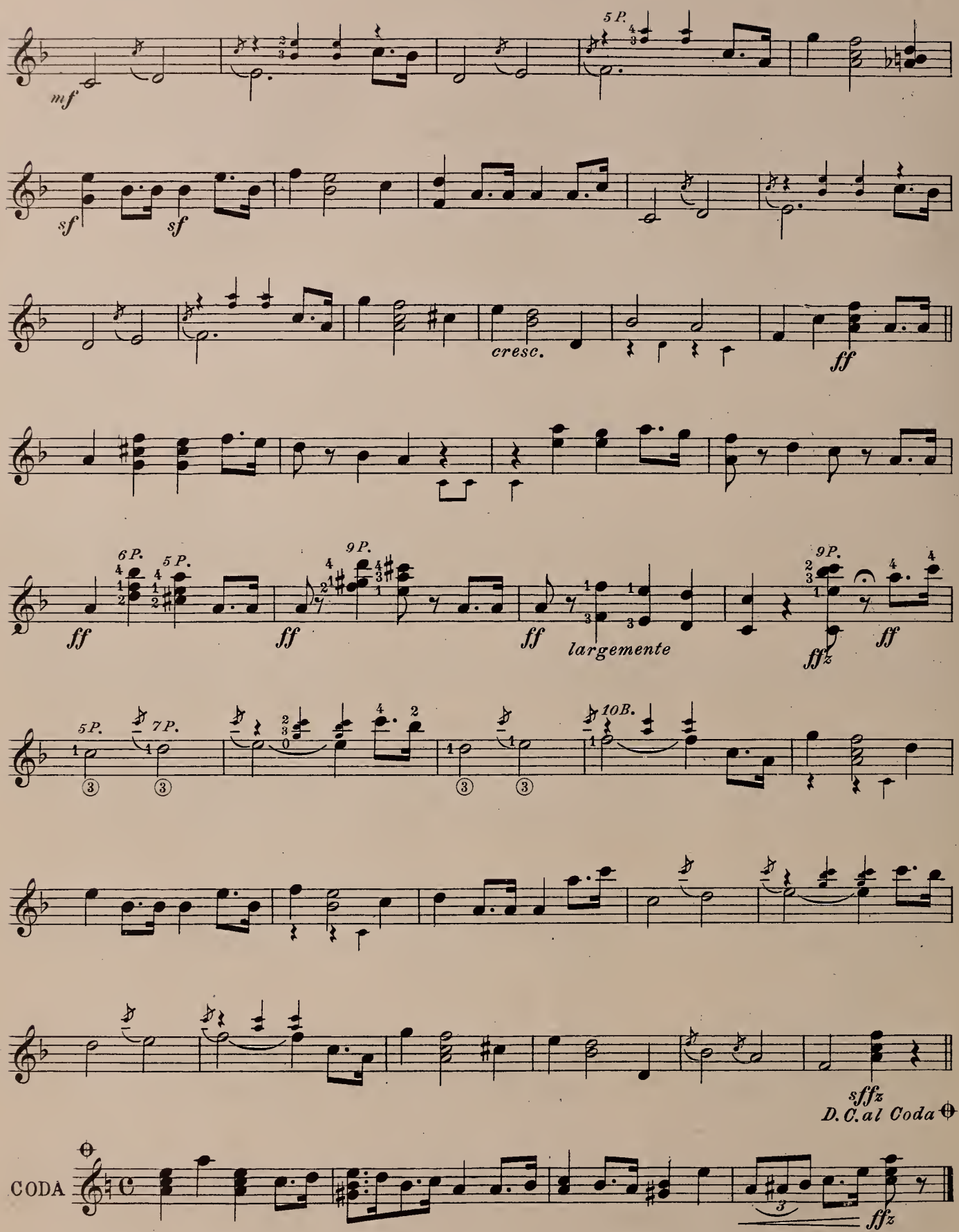
Dance Characteristic

BANJO SOLO

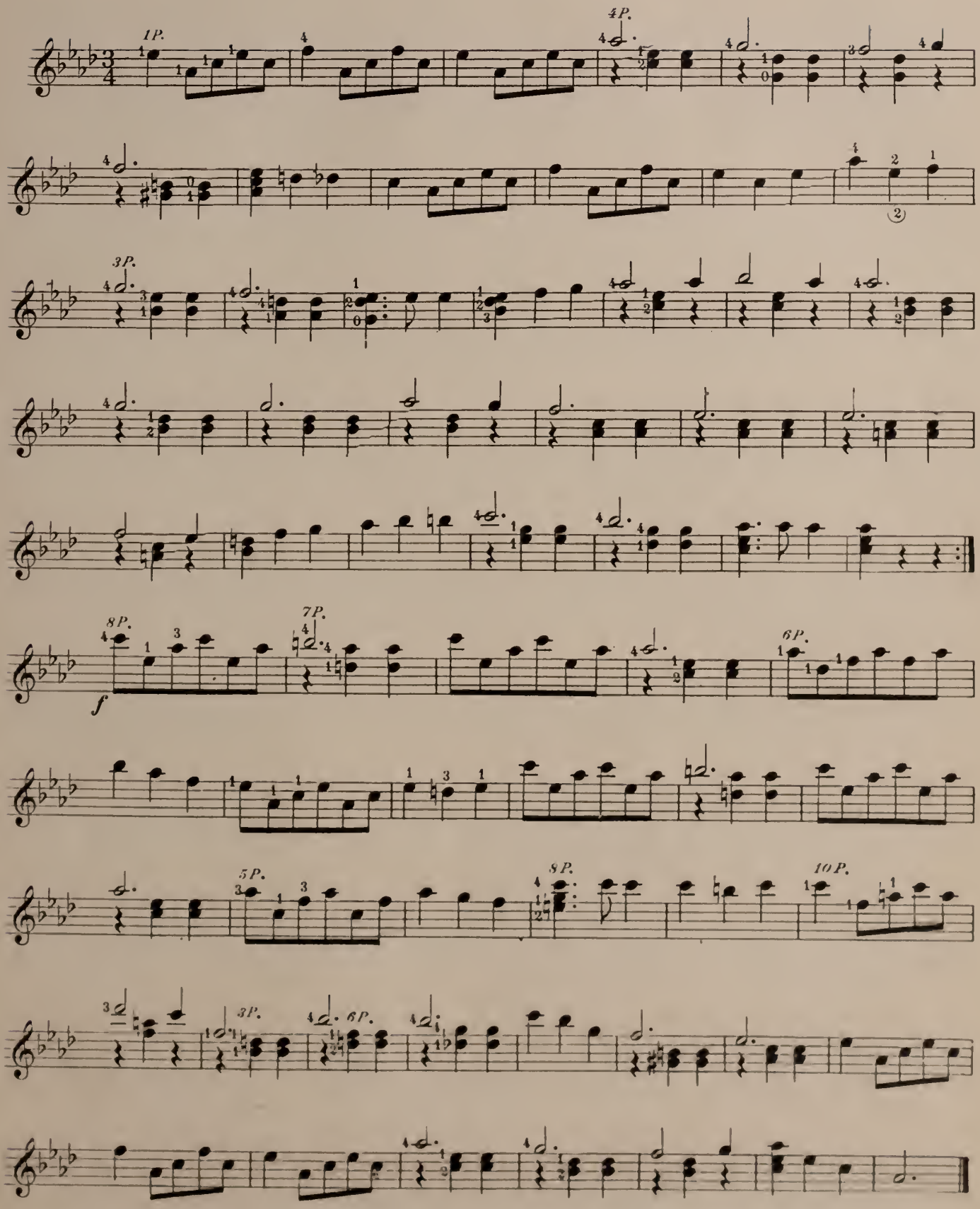
S. GIBSON COOKE
Arr. by G. L. Lansing



Piano Accomp. to this piece price 40 cents

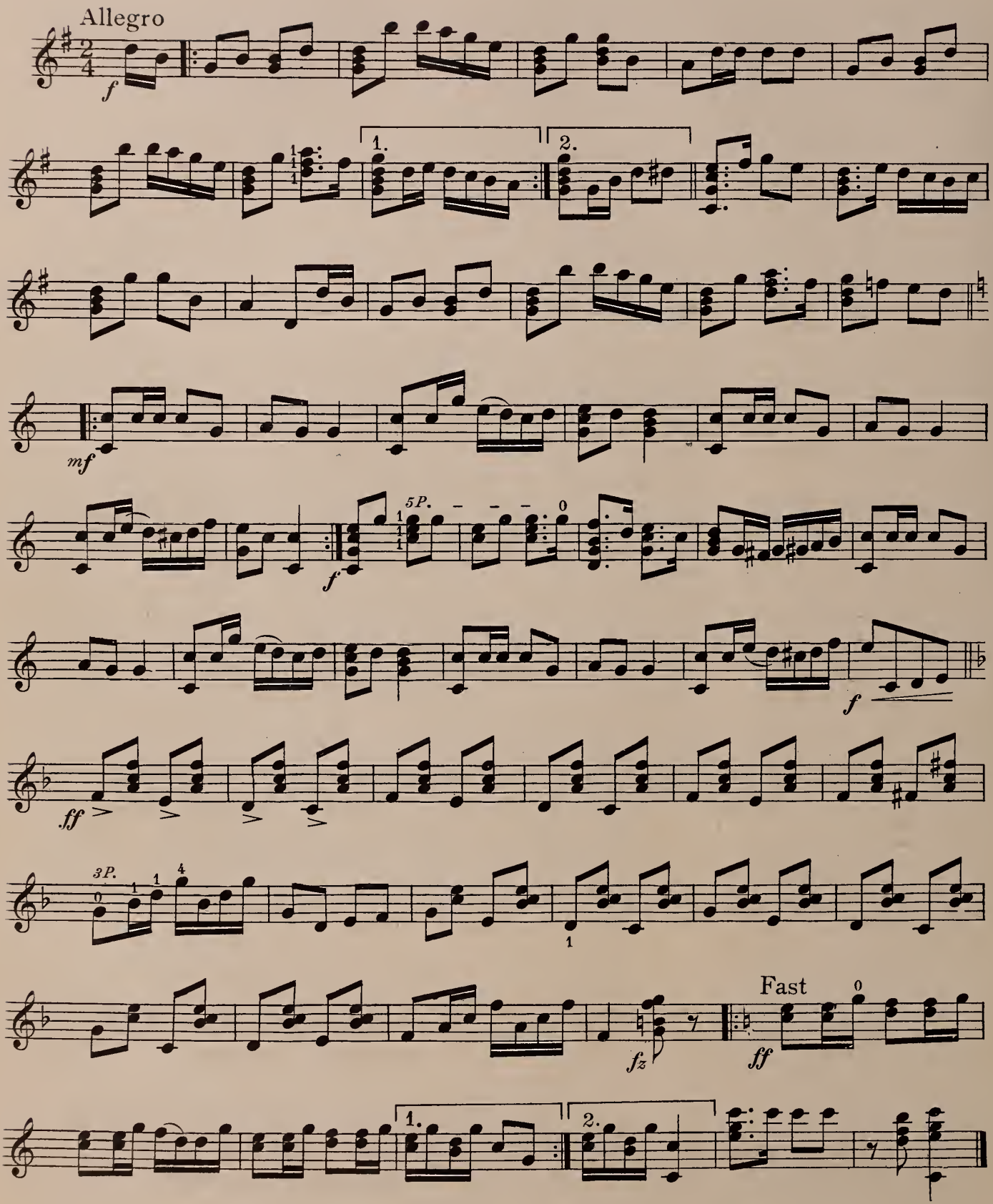

mf
5 P.
sf
sf
cresc.
ff
6 P.
5 P.
ff
9 P.
ff
ff
largementé
9 P.
fffz
ff
5 P.
7 P.
10 B.
sffz
D. C. al Coda
CODA
ffz

Waltz In A Flat



Minstrel Medley

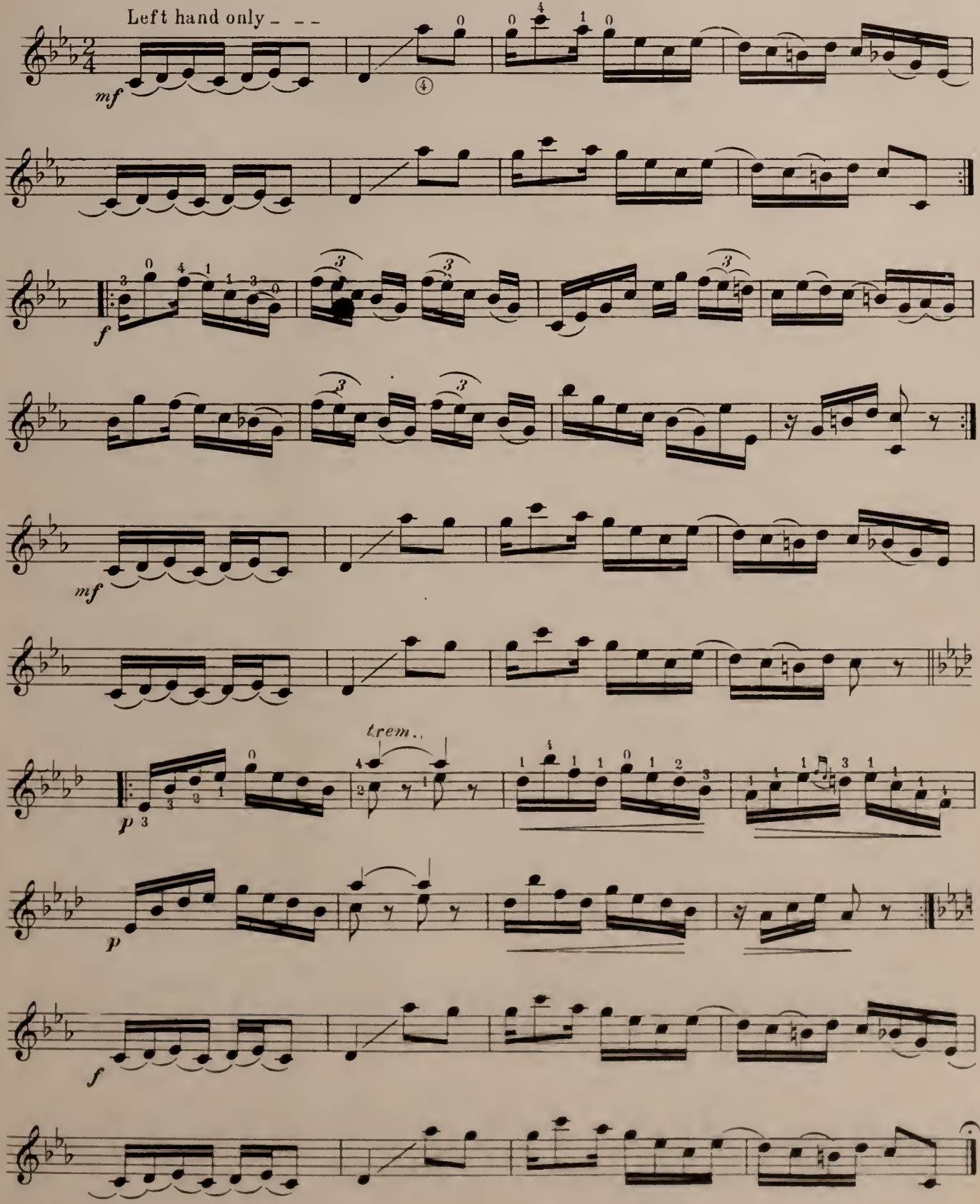
Arr. by G. L. LANSING



Minor Gigue

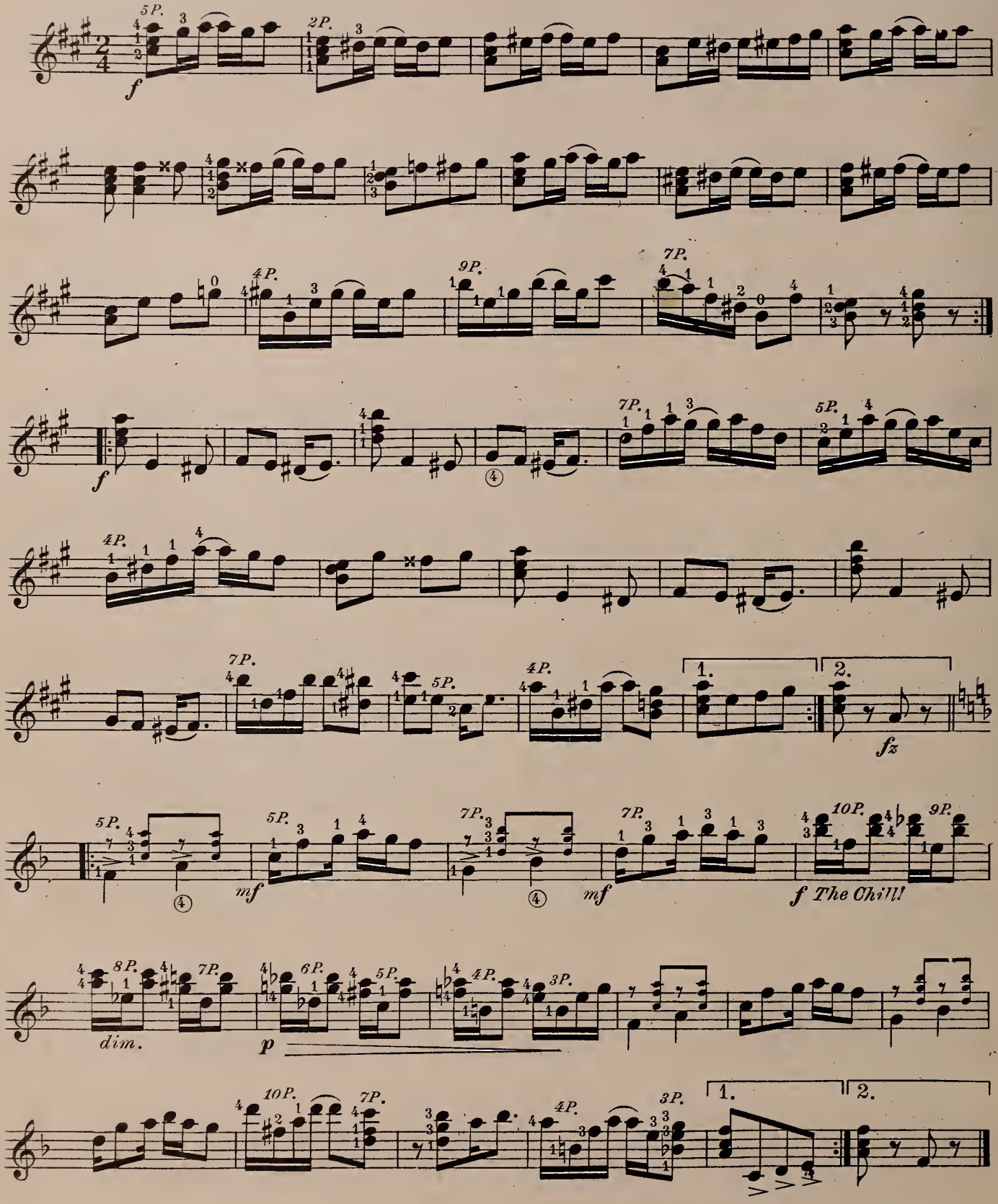
Observe slurred notes

By E. M. HALL



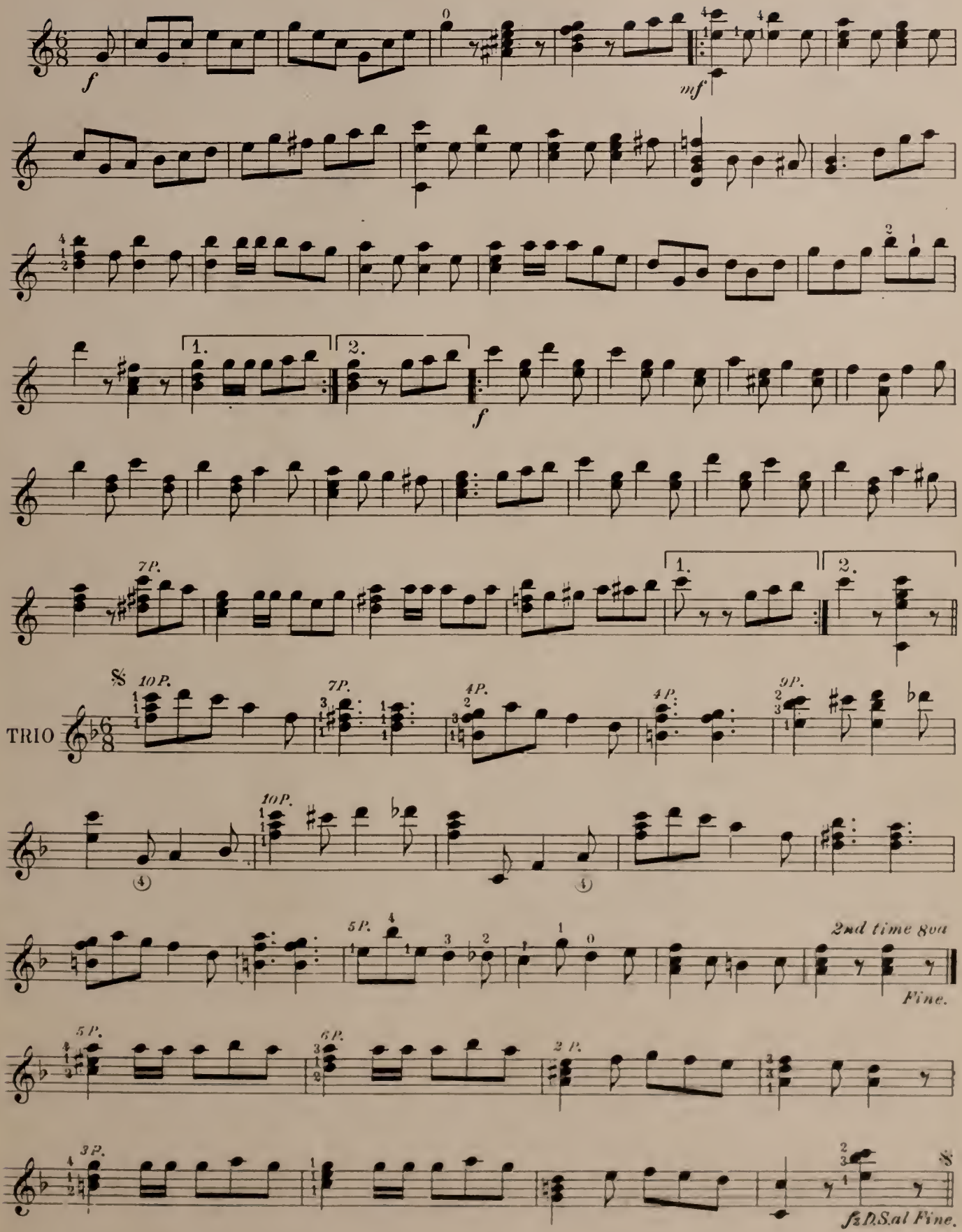
"Cold Chill!" Blues

LEO CATLIN



March_Militaire

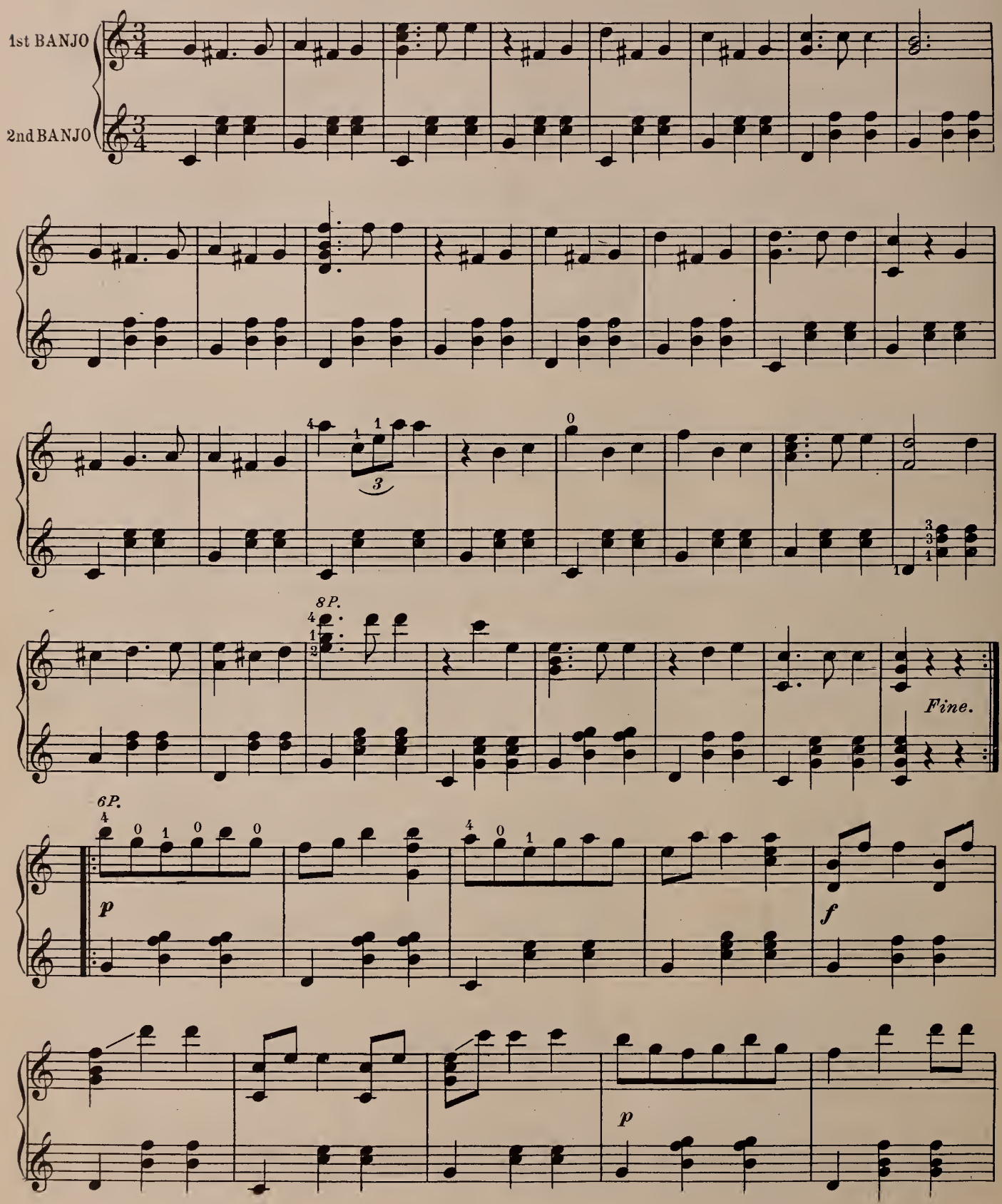
G. L. LANSING

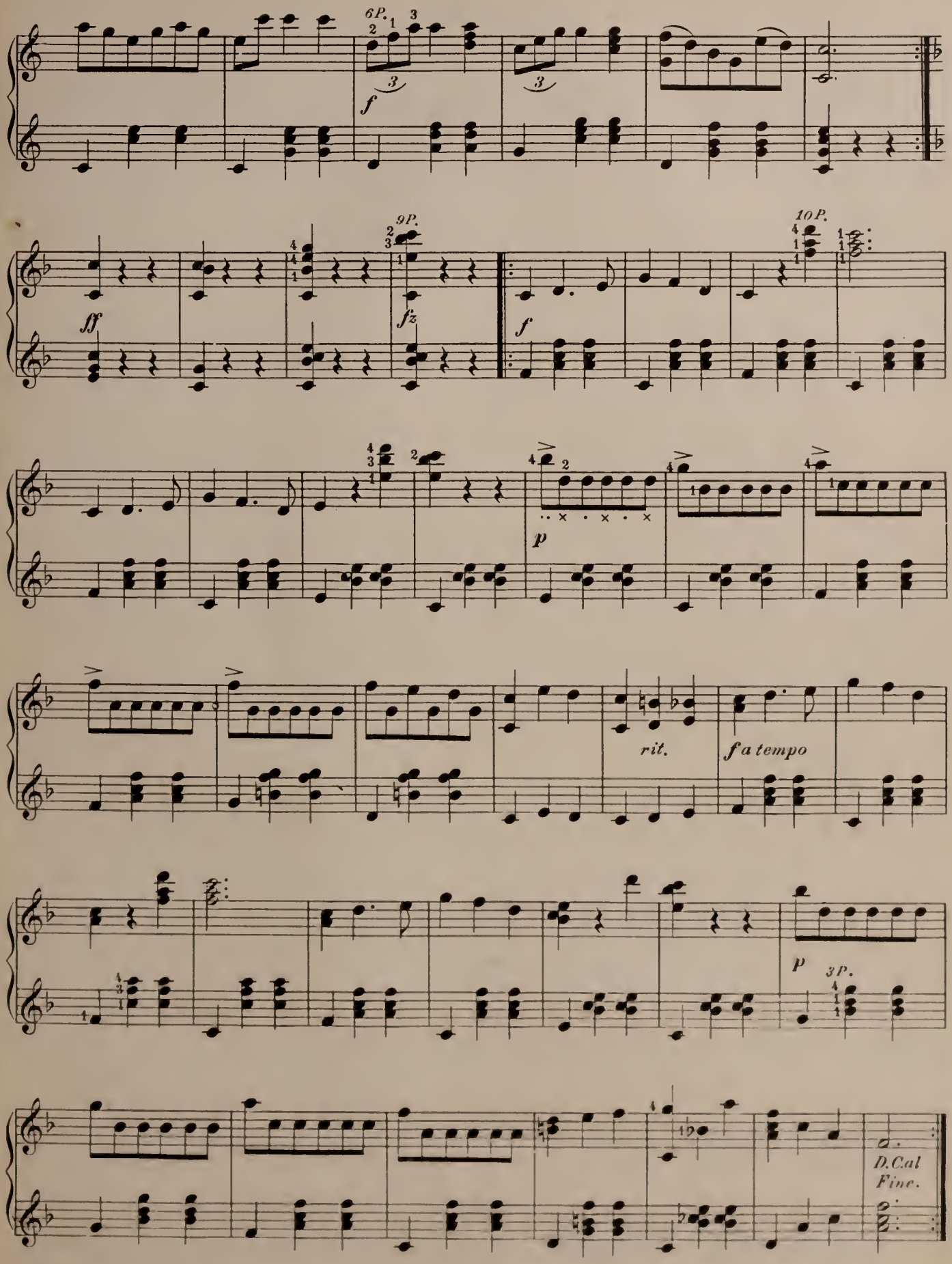


Waltz Medley

For 2 BANJOS

Arr by G. L. LANSING



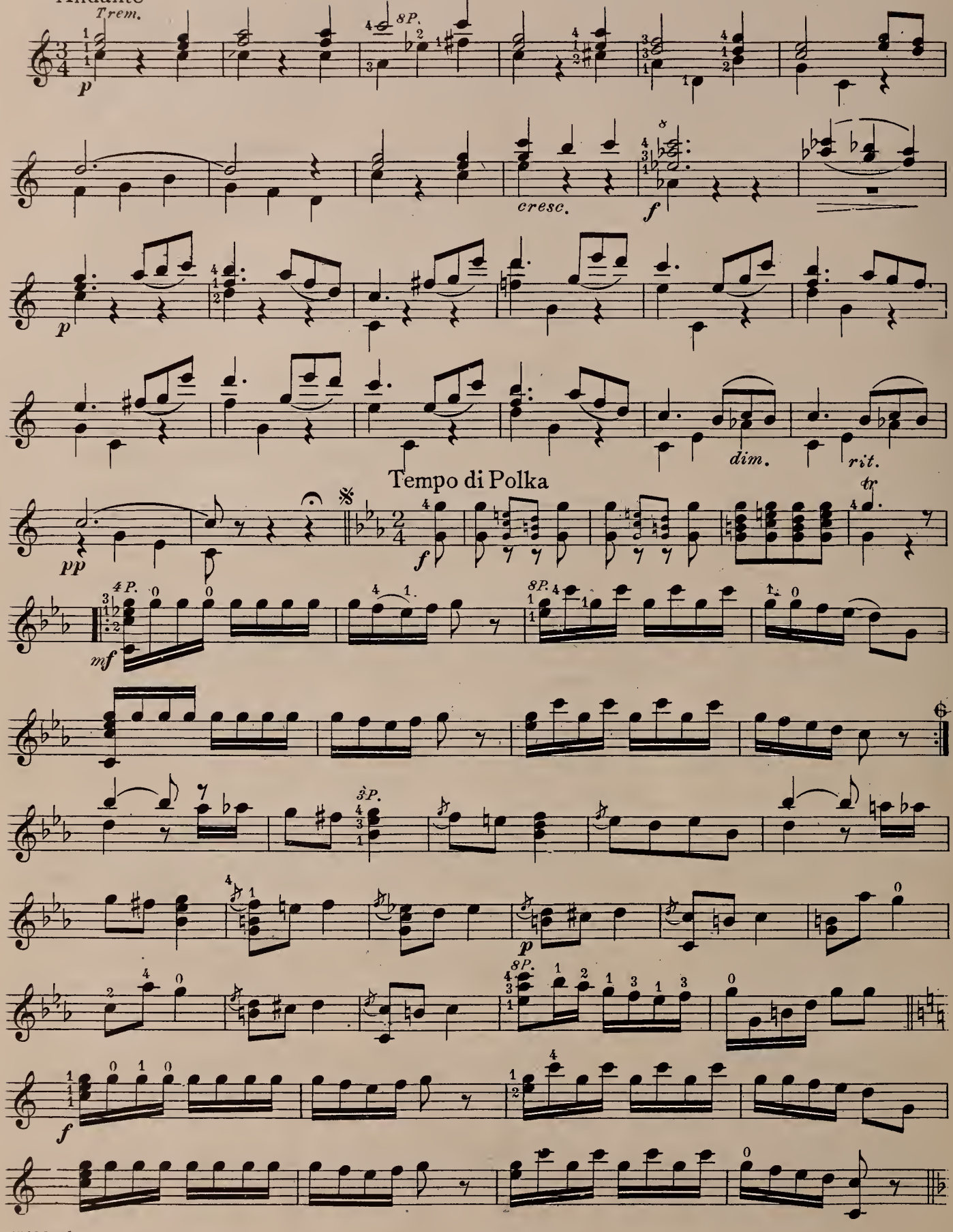

6P.
f
9P.
fz
10P.
ff
f
p
rit.
f a tempo
p
3P.
D.Cal
Fine.

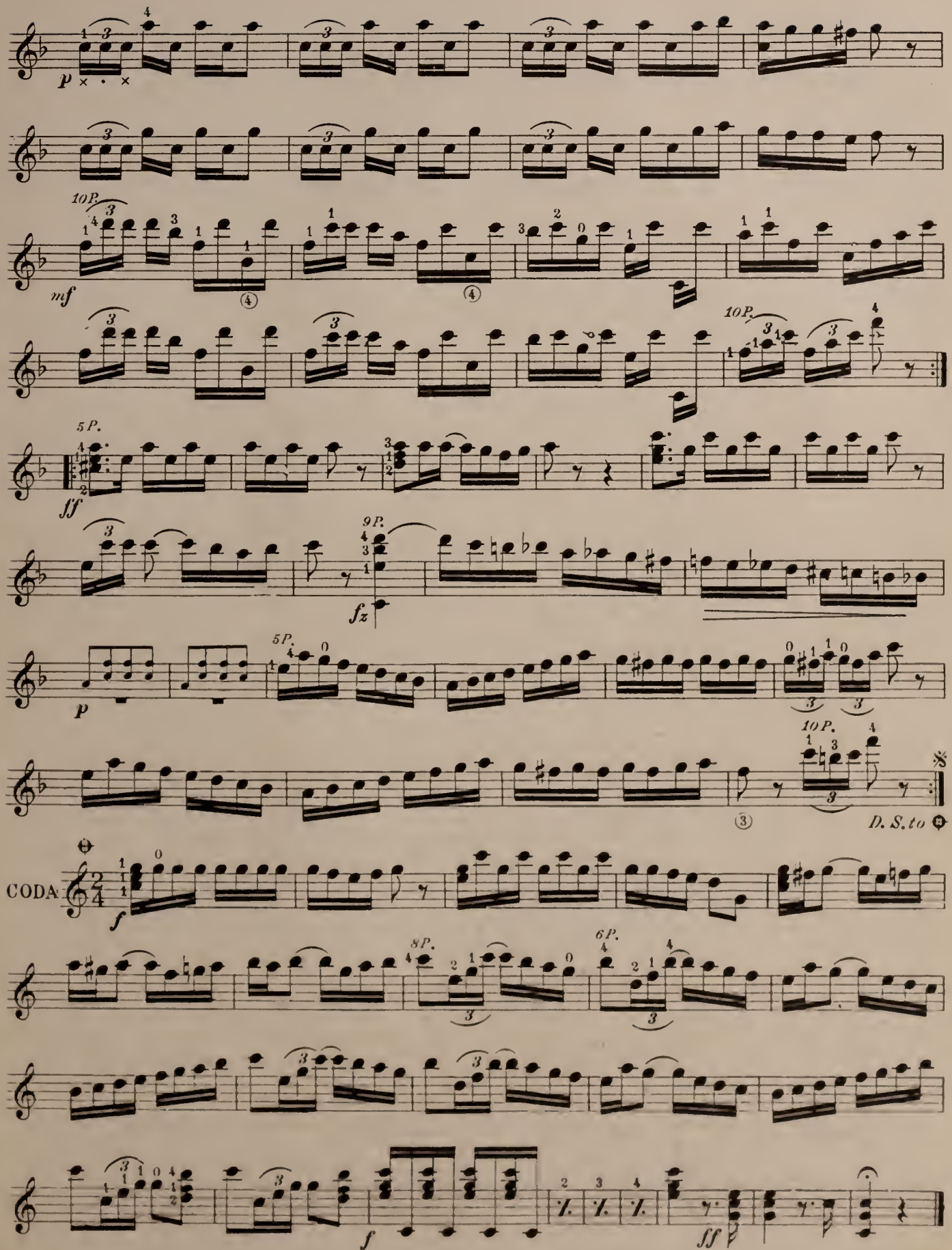
Golden Bird

Polka di Concert

INTRO.

Andante




p
10P.
mf
5P.
ff
9P.
fz
5P.
p
10P.
D. S. to
CODA
f
8P.
6P.
f
ff

The Plectrum Style of Playing

Playing with a pick or plectrum is not difficult after one has mastered the legitimate method given in the preceeding pages. The pupil should use a stiff plectrum made of tortoise shell or composition rubber. This is held between the thumb and first finger of the right hand, firmly but not so tightly that the rigidity is transmitted to the wrist which must always remain flexible. In playing always arch the wrist, and begin by playing softly. Continue to play softly untill the tremolo is mastered.

As the 5th or short string is never used in this style of plaving it is well to lift the 5th string from the slot in the bridge when using the plectrum letting it rest against the outer edge of the bridge.

Almost any song arranged for piano can be played on the banjo in this manner.

Signs for Plectrum Strokes

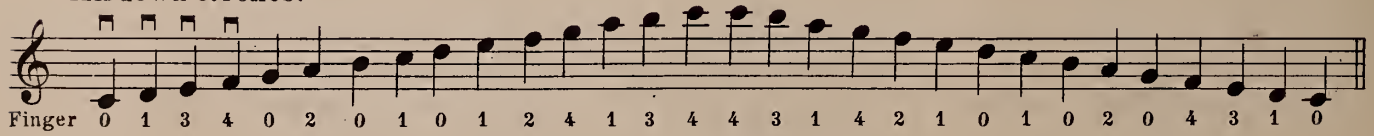
Down Stroke ⊓

Up Stroke ∧

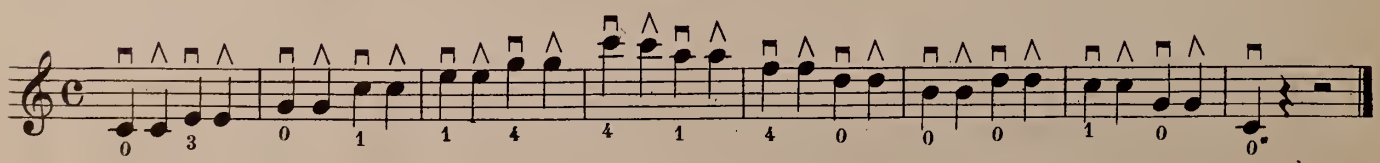
On account of the absence of the 5th string it is necessary to use a different system of fingering on the first string.

Scale in C Major

All down strokes.



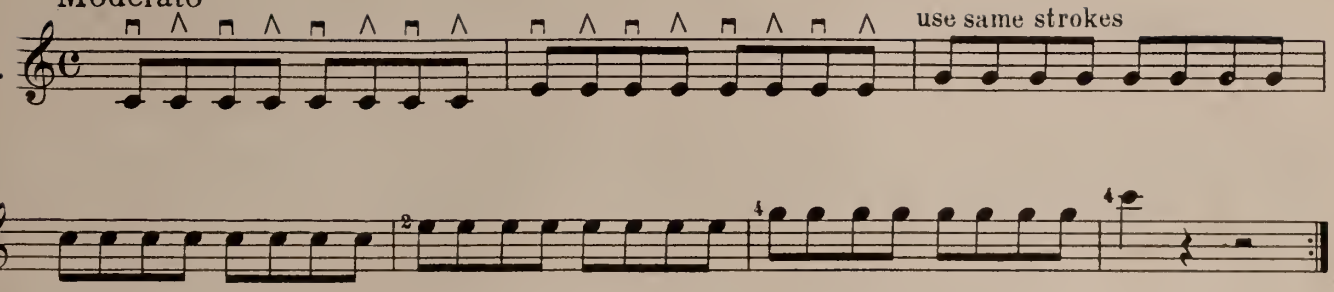
Etude Down and Up Strokes



Plectrum Exercises

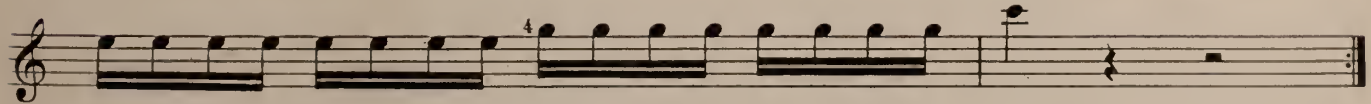
Moderato

1.



Allegro

2.

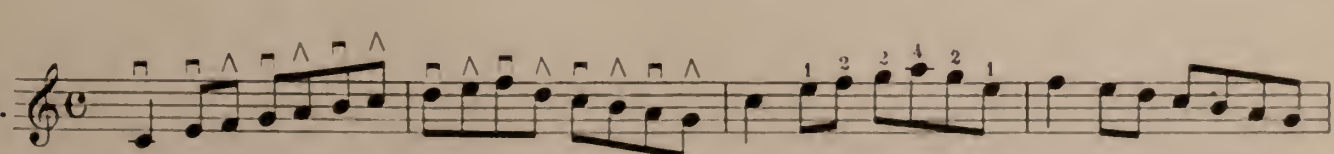


Vivace

3.

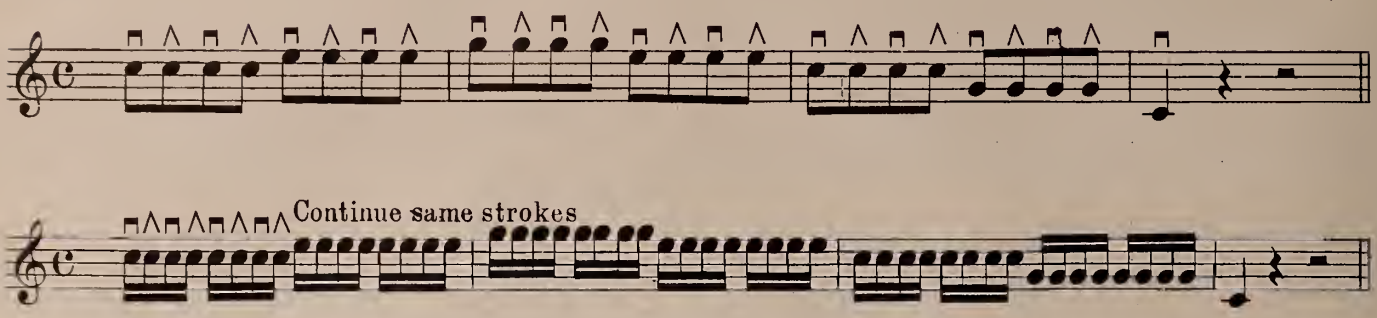
4.

5.

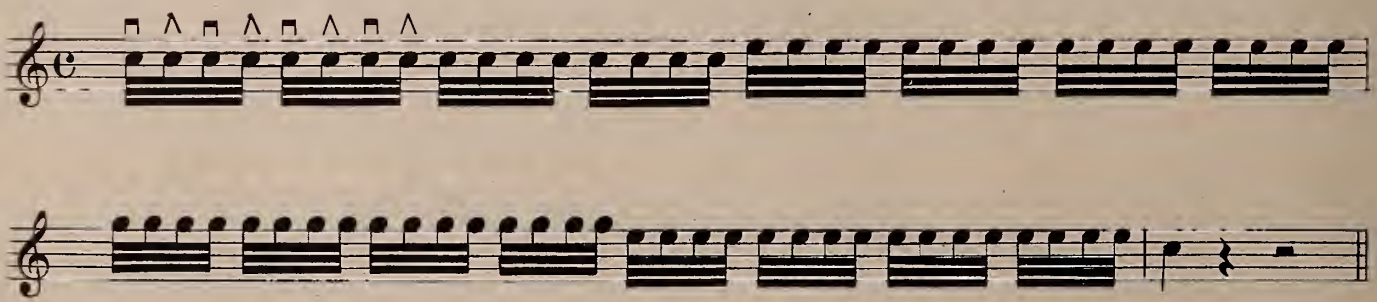


The Plectrum Tremolo

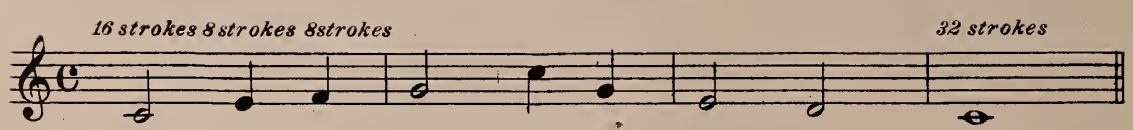
For sustaining tones the tremolo is indispensible. The following exercises lead up to the perfect tremolo.



The Tremolo

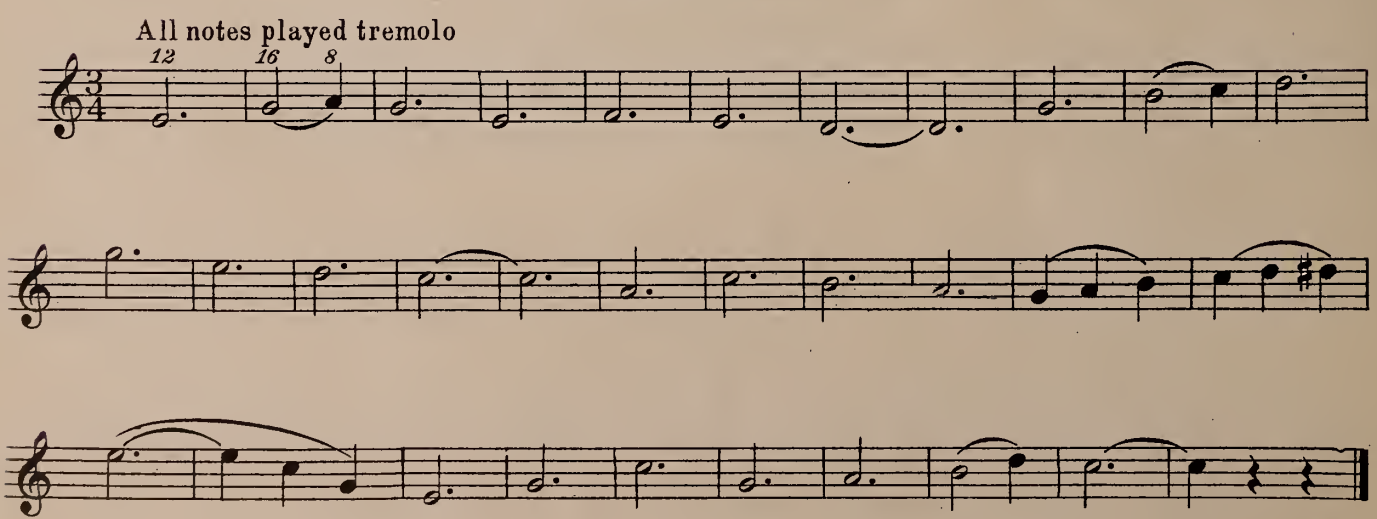


Tremolo Exercise



Etude

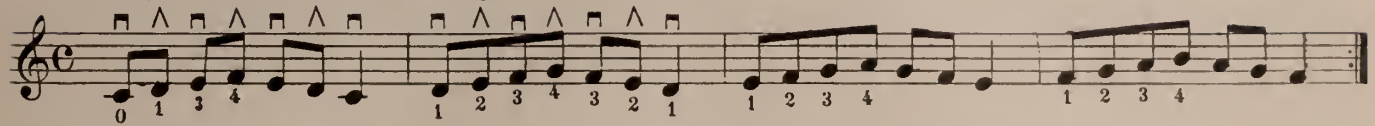
All notes played tremolo



Important Exercises

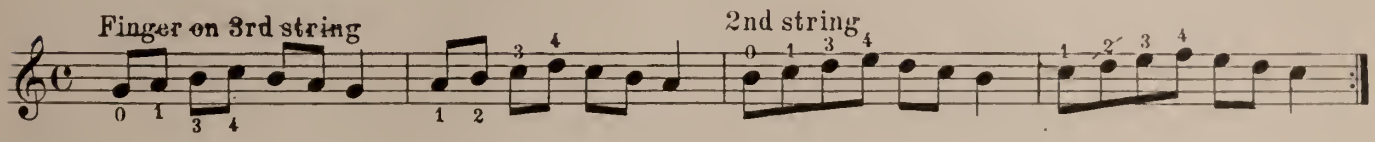
To maintain even strokes it is often necessary to make several notes on each string.

Finger all notes on 4th string

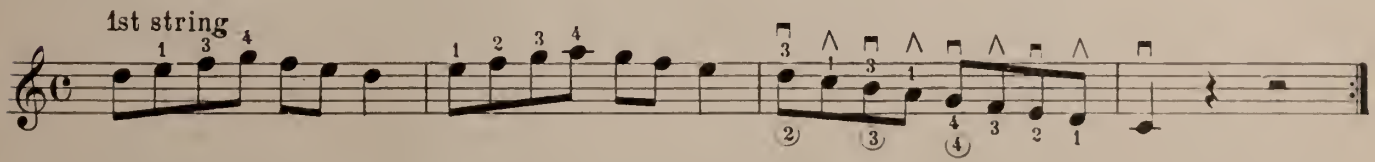


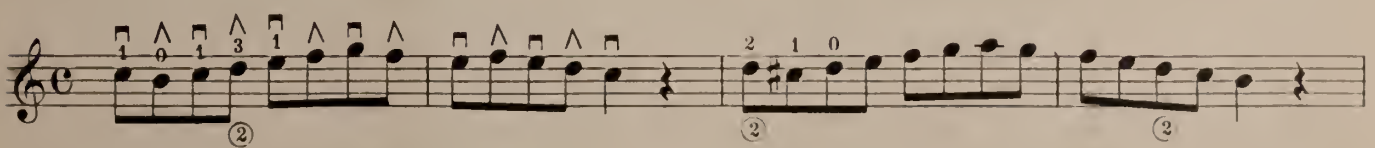
Finger on 3rd string

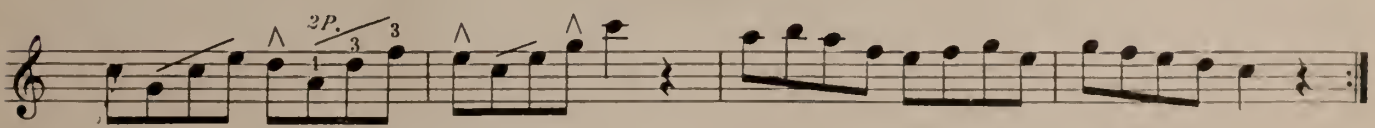
2nd string



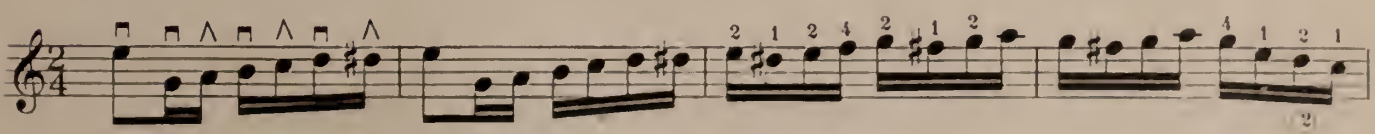
1st string

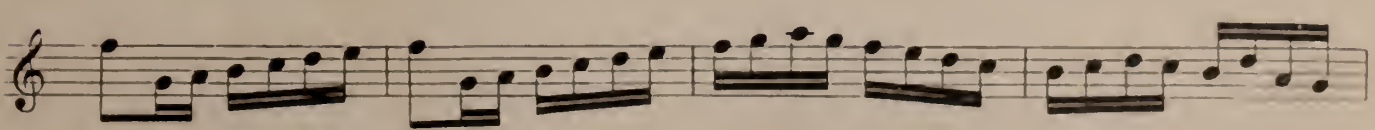


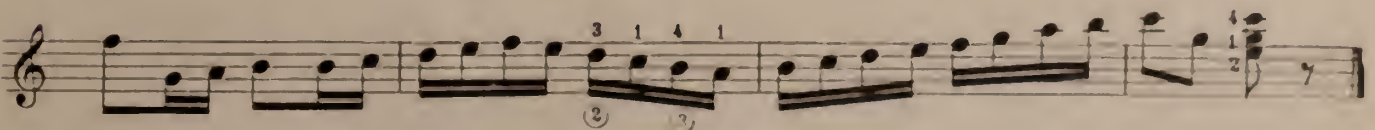




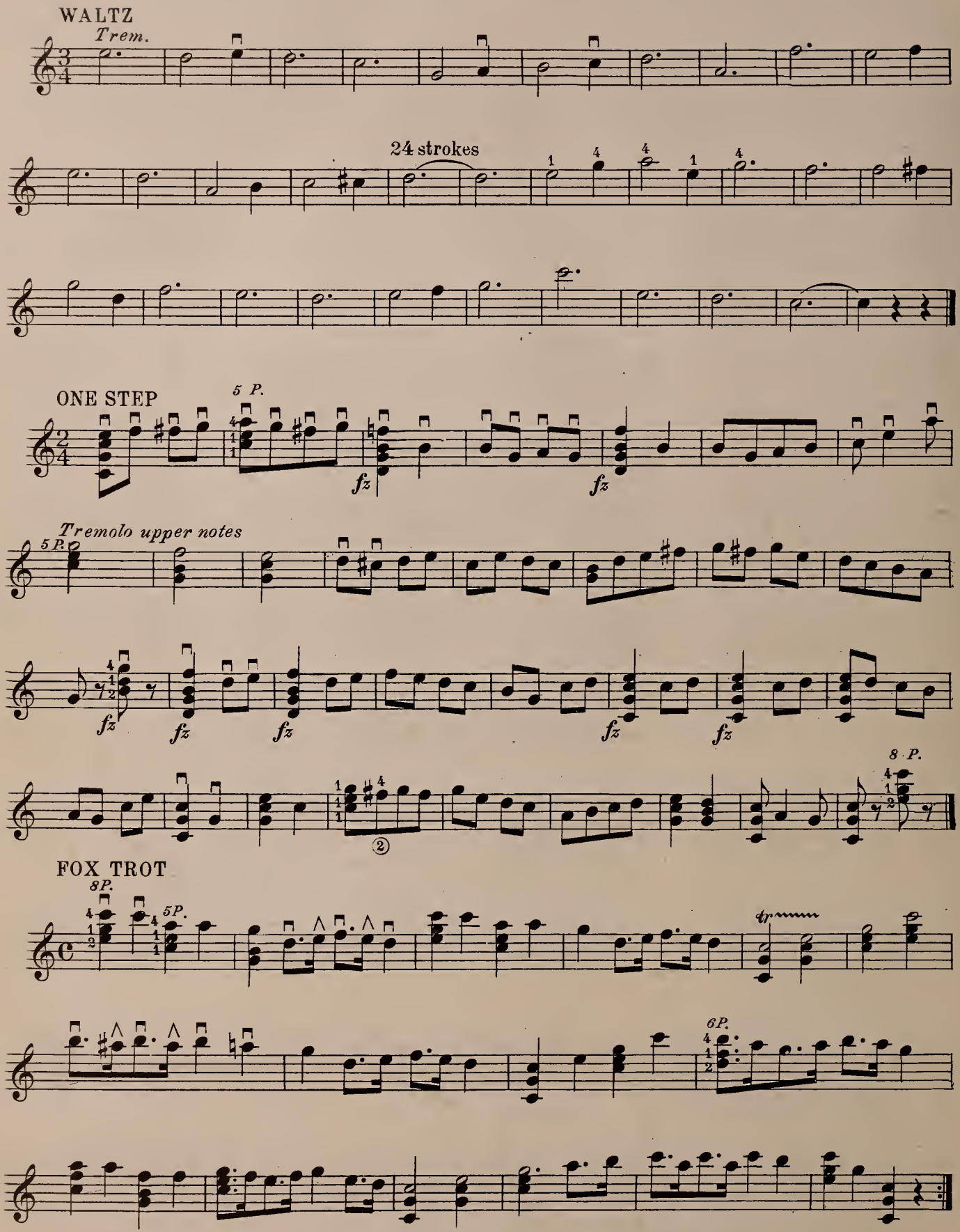
Exercise for Speed





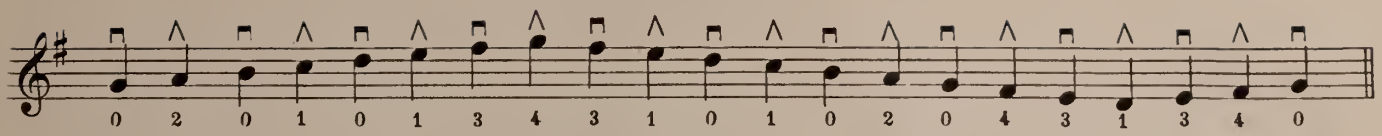


Easy Melodies
Plectrum Style



Scale in G Major

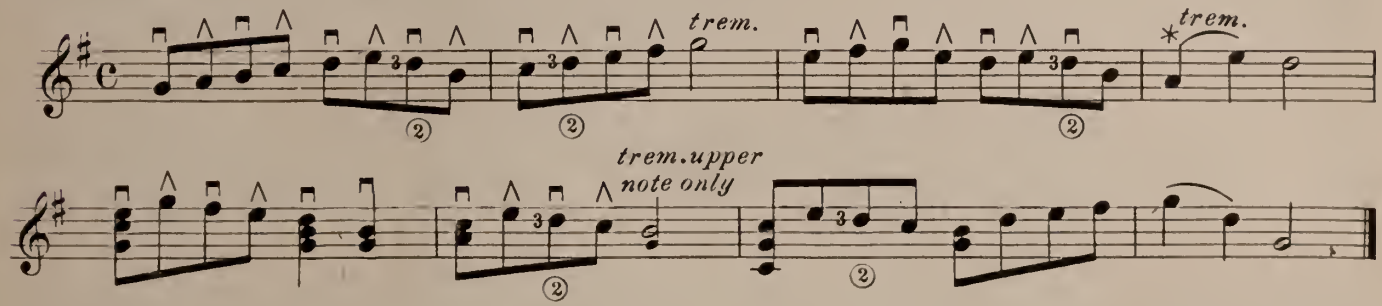
(with plectrum)



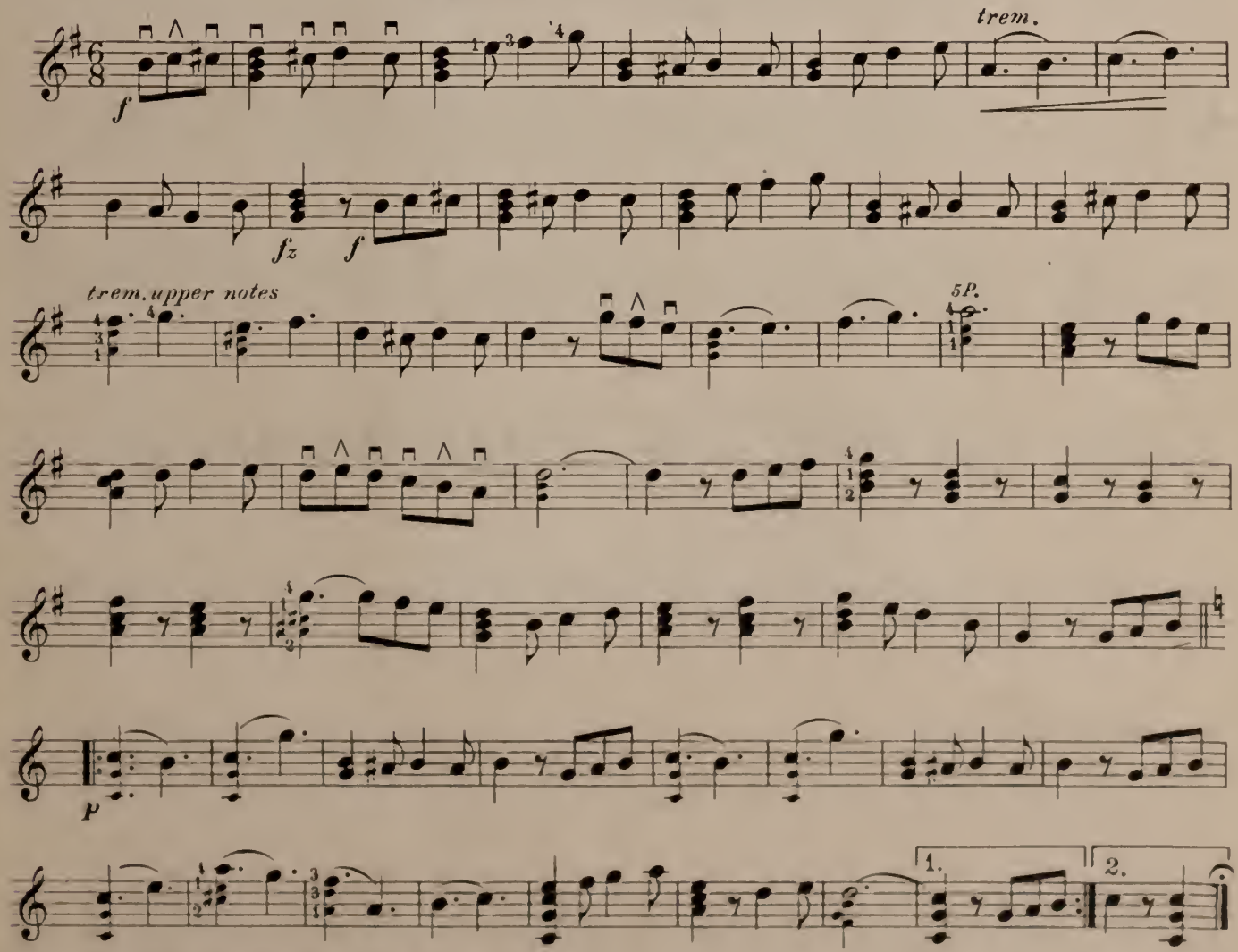
As the other scales are fingered practically the same as indicated in finger style of playing, they will not be given in this part of the work.

Etude in G Major

To make strokes even play D on 2nd string as indicated



Banjoists' Delight March

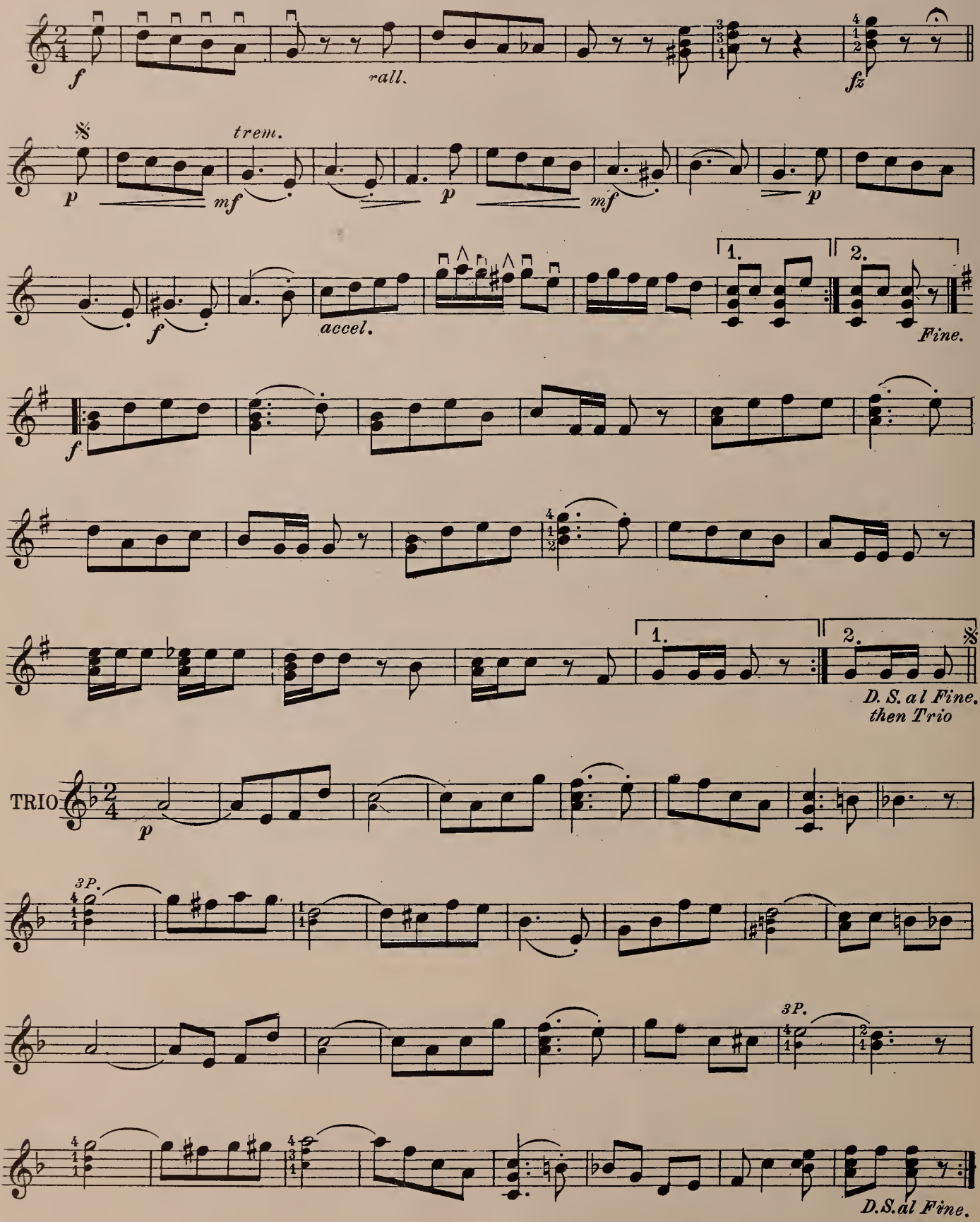


* The slur is often written to indicate tremolo

Spanish Galopade

PIRINE

Plectrum Style



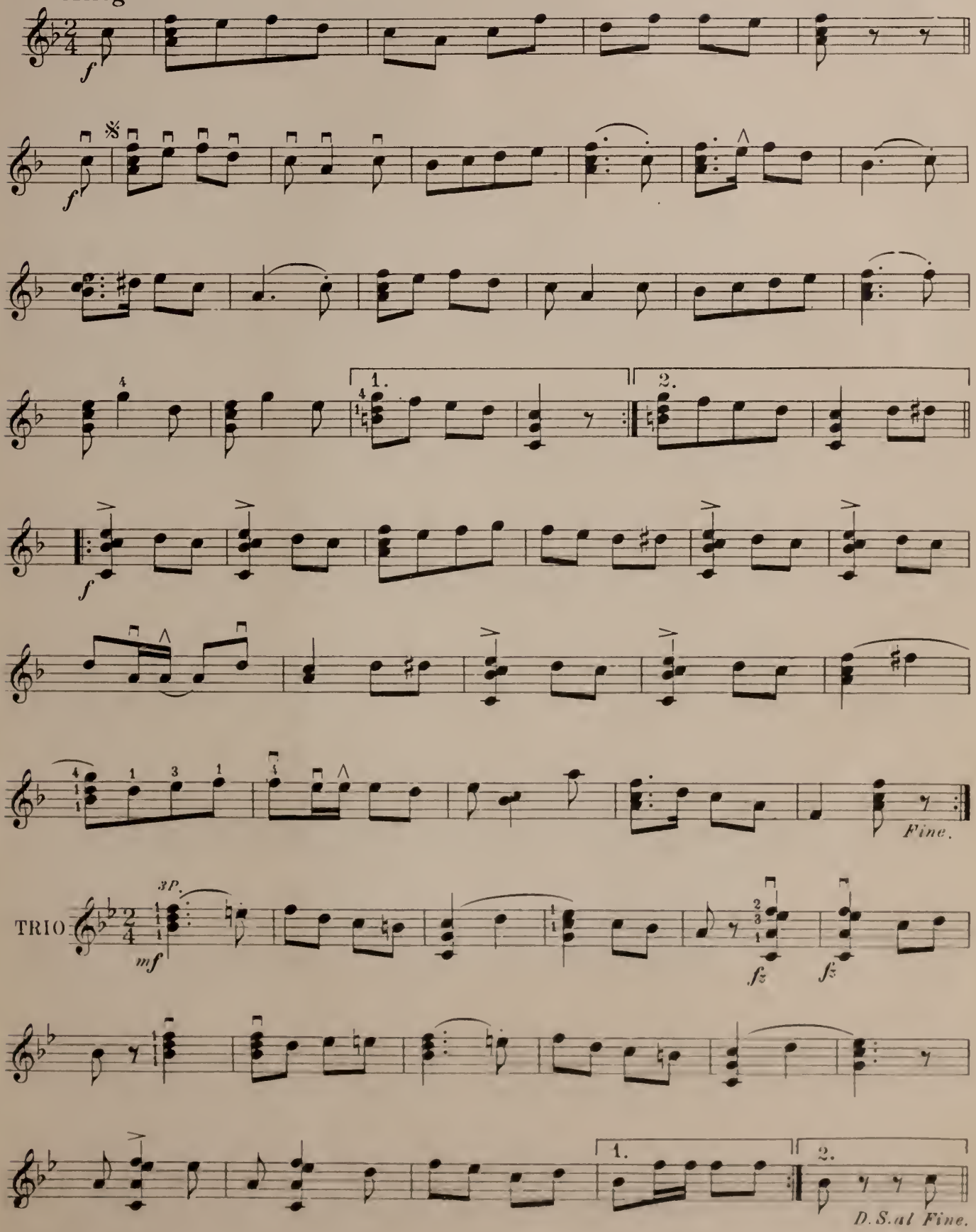
All The Rage

(One-Step)

Plectrum style

Allegro

LEO CATLIN

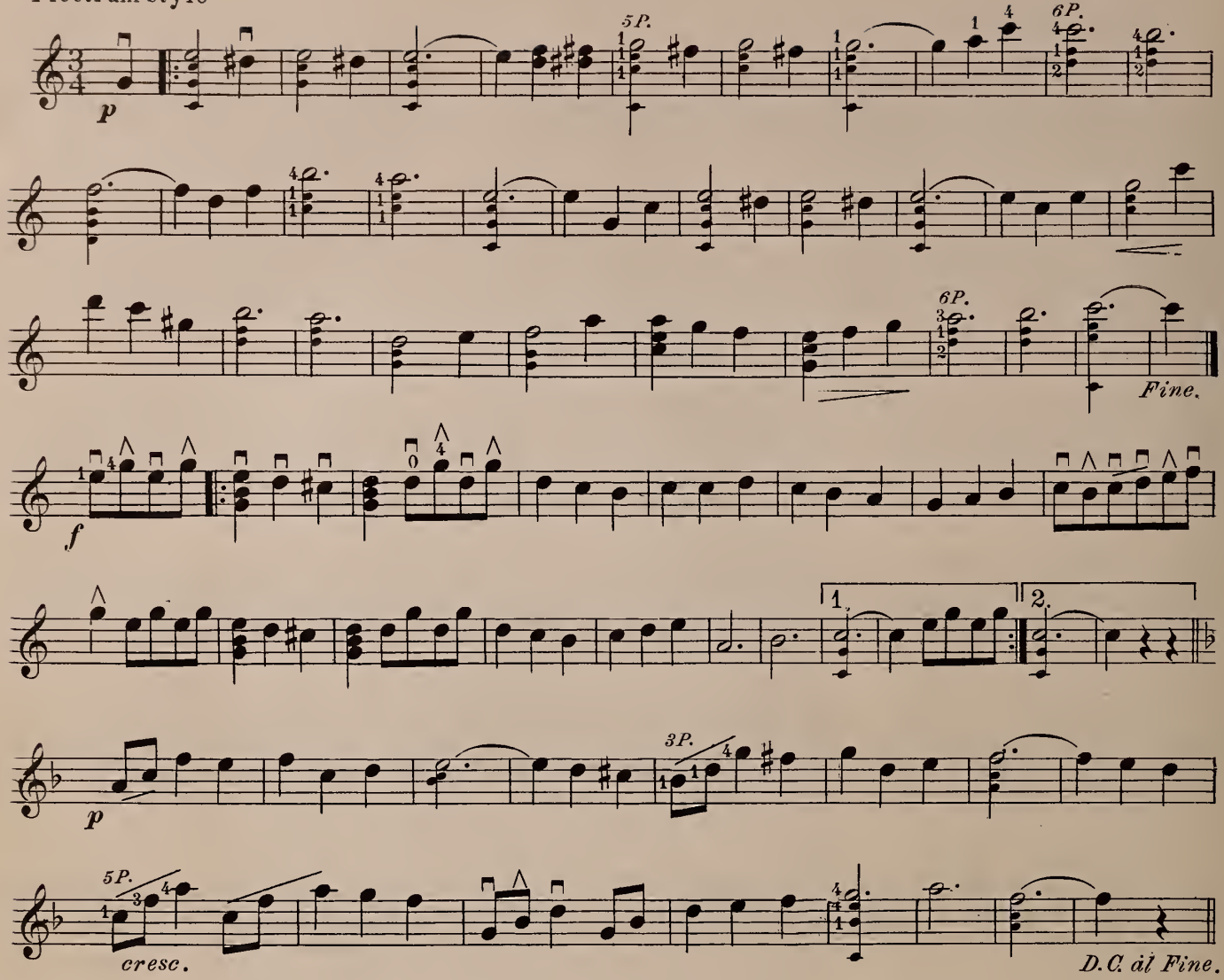


Minerva

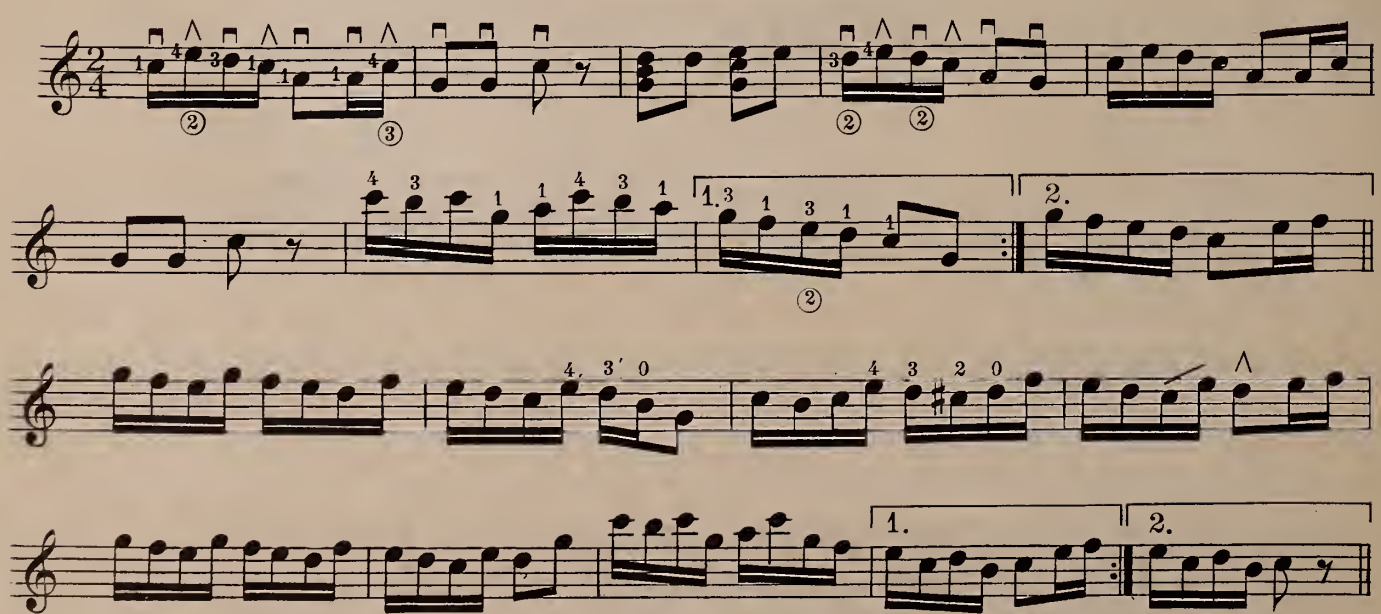
Waltz

LEO CATLIN

Plectrum style



Arkansas Traveller



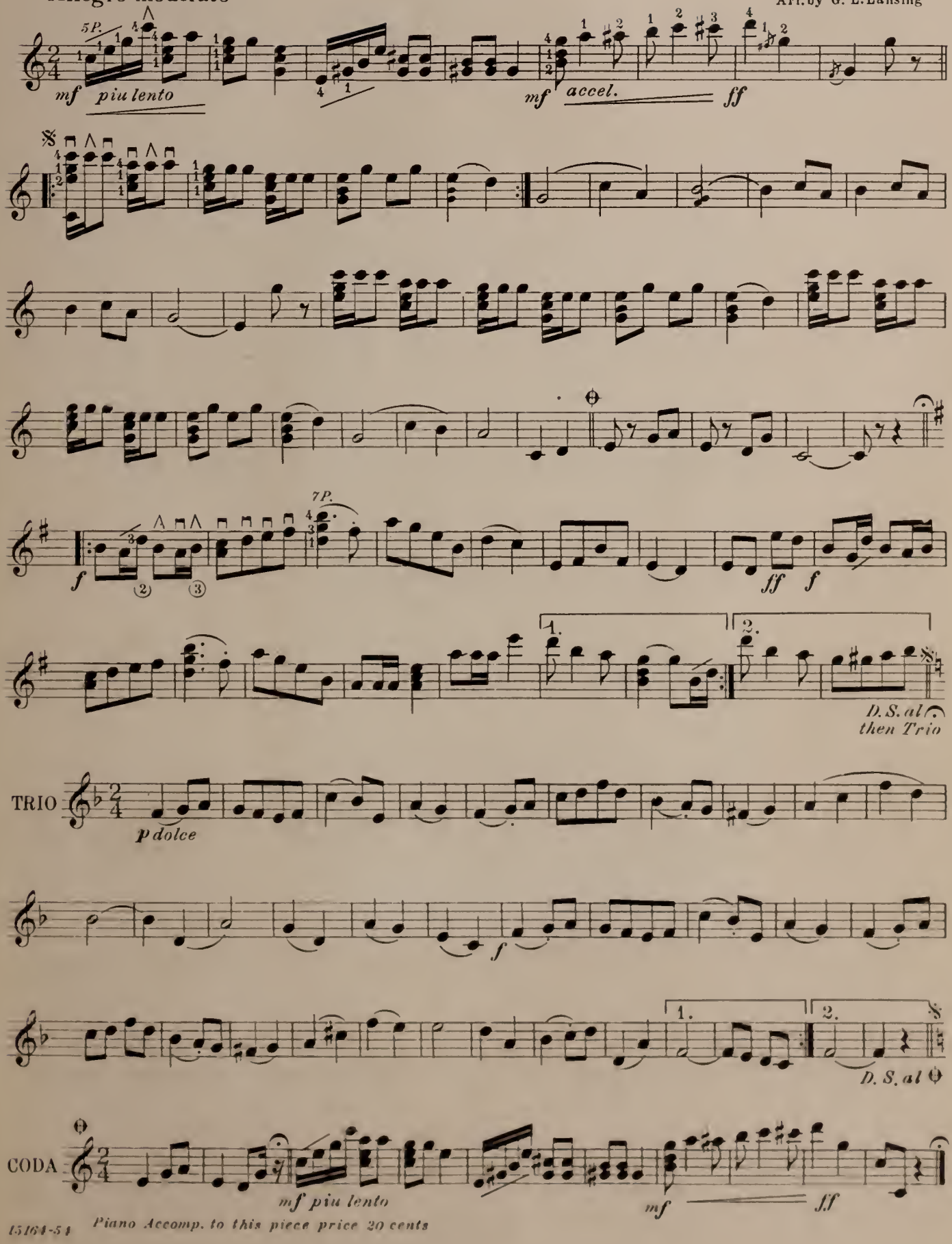
In Moon-Land

Intermezzo, Two-Step

BANJO (Plectrum style)

Allegro moderato

HARRIE A. PECK
Arr. by G. L. Lansing



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BANJO SOLO.
C Notation.

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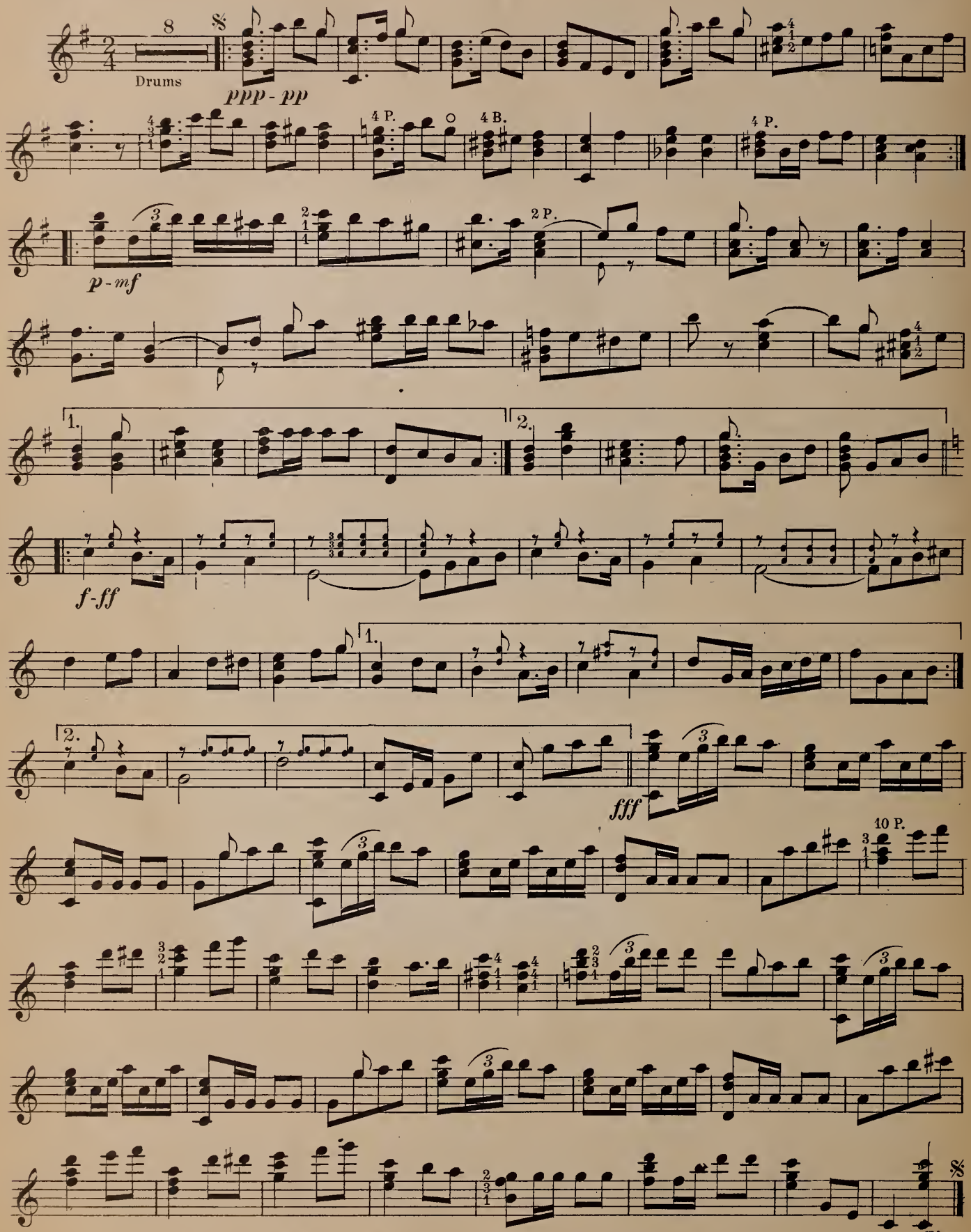
G. L. LANSING.



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